NATION

NOVEMBER 14, 1959 . . 25c

Fall Books

WHY READ NOVELS? *Dan Jacobson*

REAL GARDENS for REAL TOADS *George P. Elliott*

THE SALINGER INDUSTRY *George Steiner*

Other Essays by

R. V. Cassill, John Berry, R. S. Baker

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LETTERS

Echoes from a Buddhist Temple

Dear Sirs: I have just seen Mr. Lincoln Kirstein's review of *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (*The Nation,* August 15). If Mr. Kirstein found my introduction to this novel "prolix" and "unnecessary" he was quite within his rights as a critic in saying so. It is, however, altogether another matter to use the word "inaccurate." Since I am told that Mr. Kirstein has only recently become an enthusiast about Japanese culture, and Zen in particular, I am interested in knowing specifically to what he refers. No Japanese authorities of my acquaintance, neither the psychologists whom I consulted on the factual record of the burning of the Kinkakuji nor Zennists have pointed out to me any errors in what I wrote.

I have been a student of Asian art and philosophy since my teens—an interest that was fostered by my early life on the Pacific Coast where association with Asian people was commonplace. I made my first trip to the Far East in 1939 when I had already become keenly interested in Zen. Although China and Japan were at war at the time, I received special permission to travel through Japan, Korea and as far as Peking, studying private and monastery collections of Buddhist art, gardens and architecture, and also the Japanese theatre: Noh, Kabuki and Bunraku. Many eminent and knowledgeable people were my mentors, including the great connoisseur of art, Mitaichi Miya (who helped me make my own modest collection), and Zoe Kincaid, the first American to write a book about the Japanese theatre. I stress my long-standing Asian experience because it seems to me pertinent.

I was glad to learn of Mr. Kirstein's new interest in the Asian world, and in particular, the rich and varied culture of Japan and the subleties of the Zen philosophy. I am sure he would be the first to agree with me that misinterpretations, casual assumptions of knowledge, or accusations of error based on a limited experience could well stand in the way of the one thing we are all seeking, which is the "truth." In view of the present tiresome and even possibly dangerous, postwar Zen cult in America, it seemed essential to me that the viewpoint of Mishima's psychotic hero be most warily approached. It was this conviction that led me to write as carefully and as lengthily as I did in my introduction, an attitude that has been endorsed by the experienced Zennists whom I know.

NANCY WILSON ROSS

Old Westbury, N. Y.

Dear Sirs: Since I have never indicated any private information about Zen other than what one reads in the books, since I could never presume to compete with Miss Ross as an Orientalist, since I can neither read nor speak Japanese, and since I only know Japan as a recent and superficial tourist, I was not questioning Miss Ross's knowledge of Buddhist theology, but rather her capacity as a literary critic. The importance of Mishima's novel, as I attempted to show, is not in its allusion to Zen, but in its special morality, which is not comparable to, nor can it be judged by, the facile Western parallels Miss Ross invoked to make the book more palatable to Western readers. That I am not alone in my opinion of her introduction may be clear from the review of the same work, appearing in the Japan *Times* (Tokyo, September 24, 1959):

> This achievement is mitigated only by the idiocy of the original publisher [Knopf] in allowing an introduction [by popular novelist Nancy Wilson Ross] which is not only wildly beside the point of the novel, but even manages to compromise it through sheer proximity. If Faith Baldwin were to attempt a précis of *The Possessed,* the result might be similar. It reminds one of Rosalind Russell's trying to describe *Moby Dick,* which began (and ended) with the great line: "Well, it's about this whale. . . ."

LINCOLN KIRSTEIN

New York City

The Way Out

Dear Sirs: Amen to Wade Thompson's "My Crusade Against Fraternities" (Sept. 26). The one way to get out of a fraternity is to be expelled. Alpha Phi Delta finally expelled me as the outcome of an attempt on my part to bring a Negro friend to a frat dance.

JOSEPH PERONI

Hubbard, O.

The Big Sombrero

Dear Sirs: Thank you for your kindness and thoughtfulness in sending me a marked copy of *The Nation* of October 10, which includes the article "Jim Crow Wears a Sombrero." Aside from expressing my appreciation to you, I can say little more than: "How true! How sad!" Sadder still is the fact that *Señor* Rechy could well have been writing about Austin, San Antonio, Brownsville, Dallas and numerous communities in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and California.

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In This Issue

EDITORIALS

341 ●

FALL BOOKS

343 ● Why Read Novels? by DAN JACOBSON

344 ● The Maiden Shrouded as a Deer (poem) by THOMAS VANCE

345 ● Real Gardens for Real Toads by GEORGE P. ELLIOTT

346 ● Weddings and Banquets (poem) by DILYS LAING

350 ● The Snowfall (poem) by DONALD JUSTICE

351 ● Notes of a Novelist by JOHN BERRY

352 ● The Fox (poem) by D. HUWS

354 ● Accusers and Pardoners by R. V. CASSILL

358 ● The Reviewer to Himself (poem) by M. L. ROSENTHAL

360 ● The Salinger Industry by GEORGE STEINER

362 ● Snow Storm (poem) by STEPHEN STEPANCHEV

363 ● The Rain (poem) by ROBERT CREELEY

364 ● The RLS Factor by R. S. BAKER

366 ● Theatre by HAROLD CLURMAN

367 ● Music by LESTER TRIMBLE

Crossword Puzzle (opp. 368) by FRANK W. LEWIS

George G. Kirstein, Publisher
Carey McWilliams, Editor
Victor H. Bernstein, Managing Editor
Robert Hatch, Books and the Arts
Harold Clurman, Theatre
Maurice Grosser, Art
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THE NATION

EDITORIALS

Fair Warning for 1960

Mayor Richardson Dilworth's resounding defeat of Harold Stassen in the Philadelphia mayoralty election and Mayor George Christopher's victory over Russell L. Wolden in San Francisco suggest that American voters are developing less tolerance for vicious political smears and the cruder forms of demagoguery. Mr. Stassen started out by trying to incite the Philadelphians to a frenzy of animosity against his opponent by charging that Mayor Dilworth had once advocated the recognition of Red China. The Philadelphians yawned and went about their business. In a desperate bid for attention, Mr. Stassen then injected the racial issue into the campaign; if elected he would see to it that "immigrant" Negroes and Puerto Ricans were turned back from the gates of the City of Brotherly Love. As all but Mr. Stassen might have expected, both press and public recoiled in distaste; overnight Mr. Stassen got a great deal more attention that he had bargained for. What is surprising, however, is that certain Philadelphia wards which are not known for their piety or their addiction to brotherly love, gave Mayor Dilworth a larger vote than he had received in the last election. In San Francisco, Mr. Wolden should have been forewarned that the press and citizens of that notably fair-minded city would not greet with enthusiasm the charge that "soft" police and administration policies had made their town a hive of homosexuals and a haven for bearded beatniks. Politicians learn slowly; even the "pros" — and Mr. Stassen is surely one — continue to resort to tactics so thoroughly discredited that even the unregenerate reject them. The Philadelphia and San Francisco returns are by no means conclusive but they should place politicians on notice that old-type "baiting" is not likely to succeed in 1960.

The Uses of Scandal

In the TV-quiz scandal there has been much self-revelation by Charles Van Doren, but if any social gain is to be derived from the whole sordid business, it lies in another direction entirely. There should be less interest in Mr. Van Doren and more in the behavior of the institutions which dealt with him and which will still affect our lives after he has returned to obscurity. One of these institutions is Columbia University, which employed him and, hard on the heels of his confession, accepted his resignation. Some will see in this action a cold and pharisaical attitude toward the repentant sinner, but the trustees are running a university to educate youth, not a soap-opera factory, and had no alternative but to do what they did.

The Subcommittee on Legislative Oversight comes off less well. It had a corny star and it put on a corny play. Mr. Van Doren was God-blessed more often and more unctuously than if he had performed a real and voluntary public service. As each member in turn, with the exception of Representative Steven B. Derounian, poured on the ointment, the past misdeeds of members of the Congress were washed away. Forgotten now the Congressional relatives on the payroll, the expense-account padding and all the fraud and deception of the right honorable members themselves.

But the most squalid role in this morality play of our times was that of the National Broadcasting Company. It too fired Mr. Van Doren, but the motivations and the manner of action were utterly different from those of Columbia University. It is difficult to fix moral and legal responsibility for anything done in the audio and video advertising fields — the sponsor, the advertising agency, the network, with all their vice presidents, are intertwined like worms in a can. But what emerges in the Van Doren case is that the National Broadcasting Company permitted the victim to continue his disavowals after it was perfectly clear to the entire country that he was guilty, and extracted from him the telegram which led the Committee on Legislative Oversight to subpoena him. As long as he lied, NBC continued to pay him $1,000 a week; as soon as he told the truth, they tore up his contract. The purpose was to demonstrate the purity of NBC, but it is hardly likely that its viewers and listeners are still that gullible.

Robbing the Cradle

The enterprising advertisers and producers who, in pursuit of TV ratings, rigged and ultimately ruined their quiz shows, set no limits to their intrigues. Where adults were concerned, it could at least be said that they were willing to be seduced, but children were not spared any more than persons old enough to differen-

NOV 13 '59

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tiate between right and wrong. It has been reported that rigging occurred on the Quiz Kids show; more recently, a twelve-year-old Broadway stage star won $32,000 in CBS's "The $64,000 Challenge," and her manager now reveals that she was given advance answers by the associate producer. Another child star, this one only nine, apparently did not get a chance to exhibit her talents on a quiz show and, like many older actresses, found herself without work of any kind. Thereupon, according to the story, she cracked her piggy bank for $150 and took an airplane from Los Angeles to Washington with the intention of appealing to Mrs. Eisenhower to help her get work. Finding her bed empty in the morning, her parents — still according to the story — reported her disappearance. When the child arrived at the Washington airport, she was met by the FBI, the police, airline officials and TV camera crews. The resulting performance will not be soon forgotten by those who saw it on TV. This miniature exhibitionist, with the aplomb and diction of a woman twenty years her senior, rattled on for several minutes about her desire to get a part suitable for her genius.

Whether the whole affair was arranged by someone else, or whether she is her own press agent, is not known; all that is certain is that she has been converted into a bizarre product of aborted childhood, and it will not be easy to transform her back into a child. Certainly if her education is more worldly than that of other children, she is being taught by experts how to look after the contents of her piggy bank.

Arms in the Caribbean

Except when the whole world is at war, there is never a shortage of armaments, and whoever is willing and able to pay the price can have about anything he wants. The State Department, nervous about events in the Caribbean, has been trying to shut off the supply of weapons to that area. It will have to try harder. The Trujillo regime in the Dominican "Republic" has put itself in hock to the tune of $50 million (spent principally in Europe) for weapons. Fidel Castro is incensed because our State Department has interfered with his purchase of British Hunter jets for the Cuban air force. It is a safe bet that he will get his jets, somehow, somewhere. The channels for arms of all kinds are devious. Norway sold a half-million-dollar shipment of American arms, supplied for the defense of the anti-Communist world, to Batista. By the time the arms were shipped, the purchaser was in flight for his life, and Castro got the merchandise. Up to March, 1958, the United States supplied Batista directly; that is one of Castro's grievances against us.

At present it is reported that Spanish and Italian arms are reaching the Caribbean, some on credit. In 1959, the British sold about 1,000,000 surplus small arms, the Italians some 500,000 Carcano carbines, and Sweden large stocks of Mauser carbines — all to U.S. dealers. Surplus rifles are selling in this country for about $15, or less than one-fifth of a new American hunting rifle. The efforts of the State Department may be praiseworthy, if belated, but it would be hazardous to wager on their success, especially as the NATO nations are among the chief purveyors of lethal merchandise, and the West Germans are only starting to get into big production. On the one hand, Washington encourages the flow of arms; on the other, it seeks to divert it from dangerous areas. The task would be difficult even if we had a consistent policy; our vacillation makes it almost impossible. Perhaps the best chance for success would lie in the creation of an international arms-control agency, acting under the aegis of the U.N. and deriving its powers from an arms-control convention.

The CIA's Pentagon

Everything about the Central Intelligence Agency is supposed to be secret. For years its very existence was unacknowledged; its employees were not even permitted to reveal by whom they were employed. Congress appropriated something like a billion dollars a year for its activities, without any but a small number of members knowing what these activities were and whether the money was being spent for the national security or for purposes inimical to it.

Now there is a great change. The agency is still secret, but less so than before; the ordinary Washingtonian will now know where, if not what, the CIA is. On November 2, President Eisenhower laid the cornerstone of the new CIA building, situated on a bluff ten miles west of Washington on the south side of the Potomac. The structure, about half the size of the Pentagon, is to cost $46 million. The nature of the CIA's work, said the President, requires of its members "the highest order of education, ability, trustworthiness and selflessness — saying nothing of the highest type of courage whenever needed." But evidently with these scarcely human attributes there was mingled the itch, common to private and governmental enterprise alike, to be housed on a scale commensurate with one's administrative stature, real or fancied. By the size and quality of his desk, his carpeting, the number and pulchritude of his secretaries, shall the executive be known.

As long as the CIA was housed obscurely in the purlieus of downtown Washington, its perquisites in this line were meager. But now that it is housed in such conspicuous splendor perhaps a little more light can be focused on its activities, perhaps it can be subjected to closer Congressional scrutiny, maybe even the public will be given an opportunity to appraise, to some degree at least, its performance. If so, the public gain might well be worth $46 million and more.

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FALL BOOKS

Why Read Novels?

Dan Jacobson

SOONER OR LATER one is asked the question, and sooner or later one has to muster up, for one's own sake, an answer to it. Of course the first answer is, "Because I enjoy them," but that is insufficient, even for oneself. "What is the use of it?" people want to know. "Why should we bother?" Anyone who believes that the novel does provide more than a momentary enjoyment, and can teach us what no other art form does, has to argue his case. And when he reads some of our fattest and most authoritative critical quarterlies, he cannot help feeling at times that in order to argue his case he has first to rescue the novel from those who think of themselves as its warmest friends: from critics who are so involved with it that they never ask the outsider's honest question.

Ours is an age of specialization, as everybody knows; and everybody knows, too, that the only way to win respect from other specialists is by showing them that one's own specialty is just as special as theirs. But respect is something very different from attention, and it is attention first, and attention always, that the critic should be trying to gain for the work he is discussing. It seems to me that one obvious way for the serious critic of fiction to gain this attention would be to make it plain that his specialization is not all that special and private, after all. Indeed, one of the first answers to the question, "Why read novels?" is that in an age of specialization the novel remains singularly un-special. So far from this being anything for critics or novelists to be ashamed of, it is one of the glories of the form.

The novel really is knowledge: the recorded knowledge of the states of consciousness of different men at different times. For most of us, for most of the time, one kind of knowledge or way of knowing excludes every other; we know abstractly or we know intuitively, we know sensuously or we know mentally. But the novelist, ideally, knows simultaneously what we know only in alternation, and within any single work he is able to deploy one kind of knowledge against another, to imply one when he is writing about others, to remind us of the others when we would prefer to read only about one. In his creation of character, the novelist is continually shifting, moving, comparing, remembering, uniting his knowledge. The characters in a novel are the novelist's individual foci of consciousness; they, ultimately, are what the novelist knows, and the greater the novelist the more people he will be able to create and the more he will know about each one of them.

Already, here, we can see why the novel is so supremely important in this "age of specialization," when we feel the multiplication of abstract "knowledge" of all kinds to be, not liberating, but frightening and discouraging; when every publisher's crammed list and every learned journal is an invitation to us to give up the struggle for consciousness, with the feeling "It's too much, it's beyond me." The novelist—to put it very simply—can remind us again and again that what is important for us to know, outside our specialties, is not too much, is not beyond us. The novelist cannot be expected to know about the latest developments in physics or medicine, say, but he can be expected to know, as he has known in the past, what it is to *be* a physicist or a doctor. The novelist knows, or should know, what it is to be practically anybody: this is why he can so much help to restore to us that sense of community which nowadays is broken not only by racial and ideological strife, but also seems to be shattered anew by every advance that is made in the accumulation of knowledge about the physical world.

THE help of the novelist is invaluable, too, in our consideration of the abstract programs or ideologies which some people feel it is the novelist's duty to have no truck with, others that it is his duty simply to make enticing. The novelist must understand the attractions of ideology, if only because so many men live by ideology; but as novelist he knows that any abstraction has its real life and importance within the individual men who are affected by it. If for a moment the novelist should forget this, then he is no longer imparting to us the knowledge which we ask from him. We say that he has become a propagandist; but there is another way of expressing it, which seems to be more useful here—and that is to say that such a novelist has become as ignorant as the character he is creating; he has allowed his consciousness to become as shrunken and constricted as that of the ideologue. Consciousness again is the key word: the novel is *about* consciousness, about the kinds, degrees, the modes, the states of consciousness which men have experienced. What the novel alway strives for is a total consciousness, a total illumination of the experience which it describes. And as readers, we have to judge the novel by the extent to which it enlarges or falls short of our own total awareness of the fullness and variety of life.

However, the novel does more than "enlarge" our consciousness, more than show us how different we are from, and how similar to, other people—vital and restorative though that work is. The novel also gives point and direction to our consciousness, in the very act of enlarging it. The best way of indicating what is meant here is by giving an example; and one cannot do better than to

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DAN JACOBSON, a South African novelist now living in London, is the author of The Price of Diamonds, A Dance in the Sun *and* The Zulu and the Zeide. *His American journal,* No Further West, *has recently been published in England.*

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select one's example from Tolstoy. The greatness of Tolstoy resides precisely in the truly astonishing range and depth of the knowledge he brings to bear (and forces us to bear) upon each of his characters.

When one begins reading Tolstoy one at first misses the particular personal timbre that agitates the pages of most other novelists; one wonders at his peculiar mildness and placidity of tone; one wonders how he seems able to say such very damaging things about his characters without seeming to hold anything against them. Take the opening scene of *War and Peace*, Mlle. Scherer's famous *soirée*, and the description of Prince Vassili Kuragin within it—how he speaks "from habit, like a wound-up clock, saying things he did not even wish to be believed"; how he accedes to the request of Boris Drubetskoy's mother, not because he wants to do her a favor, but because he feels it would be more trouble not to accede; how he takes Mlle. Scherer's hand at an important moment in their conversation "and for some reason bends it downwards," as a way of imparting significance to what he is saying. In all this we see the man emerge, from the top of his "perfumed, shining bald head" to his court stockings and slippers. But it is not the wonderful clarity and absurdity of the detail to which I want to draw attention, nor the economy and frankness of Tolstoy's means of displaying this detail, before our eyes, with no legerdemain or fuss of any kind—it is the calmness of his tone. He doesn't seem to *mind* that Prince Kuragin is an old bounder, sponger, hypocrite, bully and liar; and at first his not seeming to mind is disturbing.

Every other novelist we know *would* mind; we think how Dostoevsky might have writhed, Dickens might have jeered, Lawrence might have hated. Tolstoy simply lets the old man go on his way; and as Kuragin begins in the novel, so he continues throughout, lying, bullying, sponging. He is a minor character, and nothing very much happens to him, but by the end of the novel we know exactly what he is—and my point is that we know Kuragin not only through what has been written about him, but also because we know what has been written about all the other characters. We know, because Tolstoy knew, all that Kuragin has missed, being what he is: how incapable he is of ever attaining the states of intense consciousness that are suffered or enjoyed by Andrey and Pierre, Natasha and Princess Marya. Kuragin, the creature of his society, is one-tenth alive, barely conscious, deaf, deprived, inferior.

PLOT is usually thought of as the great moral agent within a novel, what happens to a character being the judgment that is passed upon him. This is true enough, as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough; because in point of fact, as we have seen with Kuragin, nothing at all need "happen" to a character in any obvious, overt sense, and yet he can be placed for us within a moral scheme. If we are to talk of reward and punishment, we have to say that the novelist does not (or should not) punish his characters; they punish themselves, being what they are: he does not reward his characters, they reward themselves, being what they are. The novelist *knows* them, better than they know themselves or we know ourselves; he knows them fully, he illumines them to our inward view. And there are as many ways of doing this as there are novelists and novels: *Moby Dick* is as dif-

The Maiden Shrouded as a Deer

(After an early Swedish ballad)

A deer ran through the dark forest,
A glitter of gold on her breast.

"You may shoot the hart, the roe,
But let the golden hind go,"

The mother said, "Or shoot the sun,
But let the hind that's golden run."

The boy shouldered his cunning bow
And walked into the wood's shadow.

When he came where the leaves were dim
The hind played lightly before him.

He dropped his bow across his knee:
The hind was hidden by a tree.

He braced his bow against his foot:
The hind vanished beside a root.

He held the bow before his thigh:
The hind was moving in his eye.

Into the shade the arrow fled
And shot his own sister dead.

The boy threw off his gloves, and kneeled
To flay the carcass he had killed.

He cut the quarry at the throat
And touched his sister's golden coat.

He flayed the gold hind, head and neck,
And found his sister's golden lock.

He flayed the flank, and still shining
There was his sister's golden ring.

He cast his knife down on the earth,
And said, "The old woman's word was truth."

Against himself he bent his bow;
His heart received the straight arrow.

The cranes fly high over the wood,
Winging the south, gone home for good,

But who can fly from sorrow is blest;
And yet she wears a golden breast.

THOMAS VANCE

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ferent from *War and Peace* as either is from *The Portrait of a Lady*, but they are all great novels, great acts of consciousness.

I cannot help feeling that when people prophesy the demise of the novel they are looking forward to the demise of more than a single art form; they are half-hoping that the sort of power which is the novelist's will go out of existence. They no longer believe (or want to believe) that it is possible to try to know the human truth of every situation in which people find themselves; they resent the novelist's claim that we can be known, and shown, in our weakness and strength, through all the changing forms of our changing societies. If it is true that the novel is dying, then so too is modern man's ambition to know the truth about himself. If the novel lives it will be because that ambition lives still.

Real Gardens for Real Toads

George P. Elliott

SOME OF the greatest works of fiction have been realistic in mode, more have not been; indeed, until a little over two centuries ago, realistic fiction scarcely existed in the world; there were romances, tales, satires, sagas, allegories, legendary histories. And though the great tradition of British fiction has been predominantly realistic, the best American fictions have until quite recently nearly all been romances. Yet realism in American fiction is now so important that *novel,* that loose word, usually means *realistic novel;* and, unconsciously perhaps and unjustly certainly, all sorts of fictions are measured by the alien, dominant, but not superior standards of realism, which standards are themselves by no means perfectly clear. In this essay, I am going to look at eight recent books of realistic fiction, with the intention both of clarifying the term a bit and also of suggesting how the form best uses one of its essential components, a society.

I take it as axiomatic that in any work of such fiction a character is defined to a very considerable extent by his social behavior. This means that the society in which the character moves has a well-defined yet subtle code of conduct intimately understood by the author. An additional part of the author's intention in such a fiction is to figure forth the customs of that social world. He does not do this out of a sociological impulse, but out of a zeal for representing the world as he sees it; and he does this less by typifying than by looking as closely as he can at particular persons, at individuals. In this mode of conceiving, in the mode of realistic fiction, an individual *cannot* be sharply defined except as seen obeying, violating, evading, in some way reacting to the customs of his society. Among contemporary short story writers, J. F. Powers beautifully exemplifies this mode; his best stories would be quite unthinkable without the ways of the Church for him to define his characters within and against. Among recent novels, *By Love Possessed* seems to me notable in portraying a clearly defined and defining society of credible persons. The literary flaws of the book are egregious and notorious, but Cozzens does one job which no other writer has seriously done for a long time: he adequately portrays members of an American ruling class both in their private lives and in their ruling. For this the novel deserves more honor than it got from the left hand of literature, though for its flaws it deserves less than it got from the right.

An example of what happens when a writer takes his characters out of a social structure almost altogether and yet persists in treating them quite realistically, may be seen in Jack Kerouac's fictions. They are painfully repetitious and formless; this shortcoming is not at all because Kerouac lacks talent, for any one episode may read like a part of something very good; it derives, at least in part, from his using a technique one of whose essential qualities he contemns. An author does far better to use techniques other than realistic when he is not primarily interested in character portrayal. Imagine Saul Bellow's gigantic Henderson (a rain king in strangest Africa) rendered in the realistic, Manhattan mode of *Seize the Day* — that would have been a misery to behold.

I BELIEVE that the success or failure of each of my eight examples is in good part, though of course not entirely, measured by the degree to which the characters are seen and rendered as a part of their society and also by the degree to which that society itself is adequately rendered. This does not mean that "social consciousness" is required of a fiction writer. It does mean that he must know — not have theories about, but know — the society in which his story takes place and that, insofar as social differences and customs are thematically important in his story, he must be true to these themes and develop them within and as a part of the very texture of the fiction.

As an example of a novel which is thin in good part because its society is meagerly rendered, take *Wake Up, Stupid* by Mark Harris. It is full of high spirits and horseplay; the author's catching and mocking of all sorts of prose styles (the book is in the form of letters and reports) is flawless; his characters are credible and the world they inhabit resembles a part of the contemporary world. Yet there is more wrong with the book than the weak gimmicked-

Wake Up, Stupid. By Mark Harris, Knopf. $1.45.
Goodbye, Columbus. By Philip Roth. Houghton Mifflin. $3.75.
The Return of Ansel Gibbs. By Frederick Buechner. Knopf. $3.75.
The Great Prince Died. By Bernard Wolfe. Scribner's. $4.50.
The Magic Barrel. By Bernard Malamud. Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy. $3.75.
Pursuit of the Prodigal. By Louis Auchincloss. Houghton Mifflin. $3.75.
Mrs. Bridge. By Evan S. Connell, Jr. Viking. $3.75.
The Body's Cage. By Benjamin DeMott. Little Brown. $4.

GEORGE P. ELLIOTT is the author of Parktilden Village (*Arlington Books*).

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up, last episodes. Finally, I think, this English professor and his acquaintance do not live in the United States in the middle fifties but, by a process of exclusions and emphases, in an implausible society about as uncomplicated as that of *Tom Sawyer*. So clear-cut a world was all right for the boy's fantasy, but not for this man's book. Had the story been more purely a farce, this objection would not stand up. But when motivation and custom are as probable as they are here, then, for excellence, the society must be probable too — which is to say, far nastier and less coherent than the one in this book.

Goodbye, Columbus, the long, ambitious title story in Philip Roth's first collection, provides an example of a story which comes to less than it might have done chiefy because the author did not adequately develop the very social themes upon which he based his story. Among his other virtues, Roth has a good eye for the details of class distinctions, and the promised and promising theme of the story has to do with precisely these distinctions. A poor boy, through whose eyes we see everything, falls in love with a girl from a *nouveau riche* family. The girl and her family are portrayed with a careless care that succeeds admirably in evoking them both severally and collectively, but the boy is represented as being so detached and ironic an observer that whether he marries her or not doesn't matter very much to the reader — and it must matter in a story as good as this one started out to be. Worse, the true, social, defining theme of the story gives way to a frivolous plot. A contraceptive device becomes the plot issue without in any serious way fulfilling or even becoming a part of the main social theme of the story. The author, having demonstrated his powers of comedy and realism, settles for being chic, "daring" and safe.

I do not mean to imply that the presence of a lot of society or of conscious social themes will in them-

Weddings and Banquets

(From Paroles, *by Jacques Prévert)*

In the ruins of a cathedral
a butcher cries like a calf over the death of a bird
and lying on the crazed flagstones
a bell overthrown and cracked
exposes its rusty clapper
reminding one of a large obscene priest
with wind-lifted cassock
and in the crumbled sacristy
three or four rascals in caps
take the collection
on the occasion of the marriage of Heaven and Hell
All this is going on in England
partly in honor of the French Revolution
as well as the death of Lewis XVI
The bridegroom is known as William Blake
He is quite naked and altogether correct
but he keeps his hat on his head
to guard the Holy Ghost within
which is the spirit of contradiction
When anyone asks — Spirit are you there
that dove invariably replies with an engaging smile
No
When the wedding is over William Blake will make a present of it to the butcher
who will forget his dead parakeet
and go back to killing cattle
with a big mallet
We are not to be compared with a bird
thinks William Blake
with his mind on something else
which is neither more nor less than the spectacle
of a dazzling girl invited by someone or other to the wedding
and who is really lovely and just as naked as he is

A beauty
thinks William Blake a beauty of a radiant calm
pure as red wine
and innocent as Spring
And he gazes at her because he desires her
and she gazes at him because she desires him
when there appears a big Barbary duck
playing a tune of all times and places on his barrel organ
and the wedding begins
the wedding proper
as William Blake precisely states
because there are some things so clumsily
and so badly said
Is it for the Mass that you say that
asks an old man with the head of a prophet or bishop
and a most argumentative air
But William Blake is a gentleman
a nice man as they say in England
and has no wish to discuss with a bishop
the wedding day of Heaven and Hell
and who in any case suspects
that this is also the day of his own wedding
seeing that the girl is so enchanting
and that he loves her beyond all doubt
and that she probably loves him too
He is therefore quite content to say
to the man with the head of a bishop or a prophet or a safety-pin

"As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves
to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on
the fairest joys."

Well then on with the music
We'll speak of the Mass some other time
And since he has said On with the music
the music goes on
and behind it the dazzling girl
who smiles at William Blake
because he once said

"Prisons are built with stones of law, Brothels with
bricks of religion."

And she gives him her arm
and everything else along with it
and who is happy now
but William
William Blake

DILYS LAING

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selves make a novel. Frederick Buechner's *The Return of Ansel Gibbs* encompasses the social spectrum — schematically. But the trouble is just this: the writer makes you far more aware of his careful constructions than of people acting in a world. Gibbs himself is a New Yorker of almost the highest social class and with a long and honorable career of government service. His daughter and his old religious mentor work with the lowest social class, in East Harlem. At the end of the novel, Gibbs has gone to see the President and has been appointed a member of the Cabinet, the daughter is engaged to be married to a successful television interviewer, and the old mentor has just learned that the baby of one of the women in his parish has died from being eaten at by a rat. The book's liveliest character, however, is none of these but a TV expert at manipulating the masses, who also manipulates Gibbs. To be sure, insofar as he is part of Buechner's construction project, he is no more interesting than any of the other figures; but occasionally, when he is allowed to escape from the project, he comes to life as a man who is thoroughly and unconsciously a part of society and is defined by it. He is unanchored and his social conscience is about one-tenth as big as anyone else's in the novel, but perhaps it is just because his personality can elude Buechner's heavy seriousness that he gains some fictional vitality. The weight of social-worker grimness is, in the long run, fictionally worse than the frivolity of a Mark Harris.

NOR will an overt political theme in itself give a realistic novel the sense of society which it must have. On the contrary, the very presence of so much social theorizing may vitiate the feeling of a society being lived in, just as a political character's motives tend to become thin because schematized and impersonal, better suited to symbolic or stylized treatment. Bernard Wolfe's *The Great Prince Died* is, to my knowledge, the best recent example of a political novel. Because of its main action, the assassination of Trotsky, the book has considerable documentary value: it illuminates, in eminently readable form, an event worth knowing about, and it provides politico-psychological insights into Trotsky of a kind that, so far as I know, have not been bettered. But I do not know of one assassination of a historically important man—Caesar? Lincoln? Lenin?—which has been happily incorporated into realistic fiction; its actual symbolic density makes it intractable material for a novelist. As for historically dense symbols: even the supreme Tolstoy did far less well with Napoleon than with the imagined Dolohov, Andrei, Natasha; he did better with the historical but relatively unimportant Kutuzov, whom he was free to make into his own symbol.

The fictional thinness of the persons of *The Great Prince Died* derives also in good part from the fact that all but one of the important characters are in a country in which they are strangers and with whose ways they have little vital connection. They are cast-offs and refugees from various societies, all of which are conceptualized for us but none of which are felt as being *there,* nor do the characters form a microcosmic society of their own. The rather similar collection of characters in Cummings' *The Enormous Room* composes a sort of society; partly this is because the displaced people have no ideology to relate to at the expense of their relating to one another, but also, I believe, it is because *The Enormous Room* is an autobiographical narrative and not a realistic novel. Much of that imagined society exists in Cummings' memory and becomes part of ours without our being asked to hold it up severely to objective standards of reality. To the obvious objection that the situation in the *Great Prince Died* occurred in history, I must rejoin that there is a great deal of reality for which realism is not good enough: I doubt that the material of *The Enormous Room* would have made a completely successful novel.

Whether a realistic fiction is about politics, alienation, or quack faith-healers, it is troublesome for its writer — as writer — to have intellectual theories about society, and downright hazardous for him to

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try to build these theories into the structure of his story. Too often, the characters of such a story will be related to ideas about society more than to one another, and it is a rare author whose characters are made passionately real by means of their theories. I would not say that it cannot happen. It is possible for a writer to create his characters in good part through their ideas (Naphta and Settembrini in *The Magic Mountain*) and it is possible for a novel to survive its writer's explicitly imposed social theories (*War and Peace*); but both are rare, and risky to try. It is more promising as well as more conventional to go at it less schematically — to tell a story of love, intrigue, discovery, hatred, which is defined and directed by the society the characters move in, so long as the author understands it in his muscles more than in his theories. To a novelist, society is like sensory experience and the body's workings, there for him to use toward a literary end.

NOTHING is harder than to have a clear, steady and sound idea of what society is and what it should be. I must speak for myself: I realize that I could not define the word to anyone's satisfaction; like many, I sometimes in desperation identify society with the state — whence horrors ensue. The word "democratic" as applied to American society has ceased to have any more independent meaning than the word "united" in United States. We have no good analogy by which to comprehend our society. It is not a body whose head is the President, nor an army, nor a corporation, nor any sort of religious body, nor any sort of machine. The commonest analogy is to an organism; but which sort of organism? A tree? It is not mobile enough. A Portuguese-man-of-war? No centralization. An eagle, as the dollar says? Too small. One of the dinosaurs? That sounds pretty good — a vast, bewildered, terrifying, vegetarian, self-extinctive creature. Yes, it will serve. Our new totem: the brontosaurus.

American society is there and we without thinking about it know some of its workings, which is good for a novelist; but we (or at least I) cannot embrace it in one system of conceptions, which is poor. Jane Austen was able fully to comprehend the small society she knew and created, and Balzac is the exemplar of a novelist who re-created in his fictions the large society he knew. These two could do this because they were superb novelists, but in good part, surely, their task was made possible by the coherence of the worlds they lived in; at least those worlds were generally conceived as being, and I think were, far more coherent than American society is or can be conceived as being in our century.

Perhaps this very difficulty in conceiving American society coherently helps account for the importance in contemporary fiction of the theme of alienation. In any case, while some of the fictional characters you come across nowadays are pretty well outside any social scheme, on the bum with the beats, a lot more of them are in various sorts of social organizations and yet do not *feel* in them. They don't necessarily hate their family, whether the family they were born into or the one they created by marriage, but they do want to be shed of it or are so already. They don't much like their work and do not feel a sense of community with their fellow workers. They are without church. Solitude means nothing to them, loneliness all. They collect in coffee houses, in the Army, at games, wherever, and feel all the more alienated for the falseness of the community they are in. Sooner or later, these characters, or their authors for them, are likely to get around to asking "Who am I?" — that question which can hardly be answered unless you are in a strong social, moral order, and which is not likely to be asked if you are in one. But the reasons for the characters' alienation are seldom made very clear. Often it is suggested that they are *too* fine-grained and sensitive for the Winesburg-O they were born into, and frequently they belong to a minority group. But there is more, I believe, to this social illness than sensitivity or being a Negro; what more, it is for writers to investigate in their fictions.

For literature, alienation has a complementary theme in false community. Just as very many Americans do not feel that they belong to their society, so a writer, unable to place his characters adequately in America, may be tempted to place them in an imaginary or inadequate society which he treats as the real thing. What happens to people who are in or create or try to get out of such false communities as the Marine Corps, Bohemia, Standard Oil of New Jersey, a mass movement, an egalitarian utopia? That is a legitimate and fascinating subject. But the writer will spoil his story if he mistakes the false community for a true one, togetherness for love. In the lower echelons of fiction, Herman Wouk in *The Caine Mutiny* does this; much higher up, Bernard Malamud sometimes does it too.

MALAMUD'S celebrated collection of short stories, *The Magic Barrel*, surely deserved to be honored. His special mixture of prose styles, his lightness, humor, sympathy, gentleness, his way of seeing, all are of a richness and humanity which oblige true respect. Further, his vision is special and penetrating, so that it is profitable to read these stories together; something in them adds up. Although only one, the title story, has both the density and the elegant balance which all his stories seek as their perfection, reading them all acquaints you with a writer whom you owe it to yourself to know more than piecemeal.

One of the things he can do most admirably is to set his real toads in real gardens; that is to say, he substantially places his characters, most of whom are poor Jews, in their family, their neighborhood, their religion, their city (usually New York), their nation. In the one crashing failure of the volume ("The Lady of the Lake"), the protagonist is taken out of this country, and what is worse, out of a large city, to a dreamy Italian lake. There, to win the dreamy girl, he denies his Jewishness. No city, a false toad, a half-imaginary garden — in choosing these, Malamud violates his own best gifts. At his best, however, he remains true to his talent, and communicates, with real poignancy, the

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sense of his characters' alienation from the great society and of their difficult finding of a true (and often brief) community, usually in religious experience.

But because the actual world does not provide communities of any size and social consequence which fill Malamud's need for a true community, he is sometimes tempted to leave the actual world for a sort of false community. This is especially apt to happen toward the end of a story; the most startling instance of it is the last sentence of his second novel, *The Assistant:* "At Passover he became a Jew." The kinds of people Malamud creates best are those who act upon their selfish impulses and can also repent of their sinfulness and atone for their sins, who care that God is there, whose suffering is seen by themselves as purgative. He might have created an imaginary community for them; instead, to the consternation of the reader, he invents something which he calls "the Jews." For a while, I thought his Jews were the historical Jews—Jewry—and they seemed to be; then, as things began shifting, I wondered if his Jews were really Judaism, but that was too abstract and theological; then, I thought he meant suffering mankind, a mystical society of sufferers. But no, he seems to mean all these and perhaps something more. Another possible interpretation intrudes itself—that Malamud means literally that only a Jew can be fully human, that is to say, can sin and suffer livingly, and that anyone who wants to be wholly a man must become a Jew.

A similar presumption has given various kinds of Christianity a bad name in the world, Calvinism a while ago and Catholicism still, and it is true the Jews do think of themselves as the Chosen People, a risky thought. I would hate to think that a writer of Malamud's gentleness and wisdom should entertain so obnoxious an attitude; but I should be hard put to it to refute such a reading of his fictions. Surely it is true that many who suffer purgatively are not what is commonly meant by Jews, and many are, and many actual Jews, like many actual non-Jews, do not suffer worth a hoot, just destroyingly, without benefit, damnedly; nor is it impossible for a writer to distinguish among these classes of men. If Malamud had been a Jew in a wholly Jewish (or a Christian in a wholly Christian) society, his literary trouble would never have arisen. As it is, our unconceivable and incoherent society has been especially hard on him.

I TURN now to three novelists who, it seems to me, know and have treated with reasonable success the society in which their characters live.

The first is Louis Auchincloss, whose special world is that of the highest social class, much money, and not so much power as formerly. If there is one social theme he might develop more thoroughly, it is that of the ways in which this class deals with the economic and political power it inherited and has now lost, allowed to slip away, or sometimes tries to recapture. However, within the fictional comedy of manners, which pretty much is his chosen form, he is the best since the early Marquand. He sees the world of the New York rich with a satiric and meticulous eye; he is a real pro at the difficult craft of constructing and developing a plot; he controls his characters and their actions with a firm, steady hand. *Pursuit of the Prodigal* is nearly first-rate of its kind, though not quite. The protagonist moves from the old-fashioned, staid, respectable world of his Long Island family and his first law firm to Greenwich Village and a law firm which seems to him not hypocritical in its chicaneries; then, through remarriage, he moves halfway back to his origins. He hurts others and is hurt; he discovers as much of himself as he can, he is defined, within a society which he is intimately a part of, a recognizable and in some ways fairly important segment of actual American society.

But such a form demands of its author an absolutely, unrelentingly firm discipline, cold, impartial, morally right; and rather more often than is good for his book, Auchincloss relaxes into such shoddinesses as spite against a character (especially the protagonist's first wife) and a certain banality of style (especially in some of the social conversations). It seems

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to me that all he lacks as a novelist of manners is adequate control over the form he has chosen, a difficult form, it is true, but proved to be sound.

In *Mrs. Bridge,* Evan Connell has set himself a modest but difficult task: to make a true-to-life portrait of a woman, but to do it in the manner of a mosaicist. He has laid 117 small, hard, bright chapters, not one of them conventionally satisfying in a narrative way, in so elegant a pattern that the whole portrait is a marvel. Some of the details are weak: his irony is occasionally obvious and his hatred sometimes excessive or excessively present; once, his pathos comes too easily. But the cold, exact method holds the reader away from Mrs. Bridge, who is the entire focus of attention in the book, so that these small imperfections do not bother the memory; the total effect is right. And the author defines Mrs. Bridge almost entirely within and by her society. This is the domestic world of bourgeois Kansas City in this century, and Connell's presentation of that world is deadly accurate both in detail and in depth. If you were born thirty or forty years ago into a respectable middle-class Protestant white Middle-Western family, then Mrs. Bridge was a neighbor of yours and maybe is your mother.

BENJAMIN DeMOTT, in *The Body's Cage,* so beautifully illustrates my final main point that I am in danger of over-valuing it. After which caveat, I feel free to say I was delighted and absorbed by the novel just as a book to read. DeMott has learned something of Faulkner's method of withholding and distributing information in a novel, but being primarily realistic in his style and having his own taut voice, he has not been ensnared by Faulkner's rhetoric or themes or (except for one servant) characters. In a word, he has learned from the master, not become a Faulknerite.

The first two sentences announce the book: "Kimball did not know much at first. Only that Mrs. Chithero, their mother's lady friend who prayed people well instead of tending them with medicine — only that she came to live in their house." The main theme is Kimball's discovery of his family, his father and himself, and his gaining with that knowledge power to control himself. This discovery is made necessary and possible as the result of the vengeful Mrs. Chithero's use of Christian Science to damage Kimball's father through Kimball's mother and sister. The action takes place in a town in the Northeast from before World War I up into the depression, and, just because of the nature of the conflicts among and needs of the central characters, parts of the whole community are involved in the novel. There are pillars of society in the book, doctor lawyer minister judge, but none behaves otherwise than his counterpart would have behaved in real life; they are individuals, not types. There are no social issues in the book, and not even the author seems concerned with changes and quirks of social custom. Yet every character belongs absolutely to the community they are all in. Their society is one of the understood conditions of their acting and not a thing to be looked at analytically, satirically, proudly, in any detached way at all by them, the author, or the reader.

And this, it seems to me, is the best possible use of society in realistic fiction. Samuel Richardson, one of the fathers of such fiction, wrote at a time when the family unit had contracted, the middle classes were increasing in power and size, and the Industrial Revolution was getting under way. But he didn't know any of these things by these terms. He knew them better than any historian of society now can know them, but not conceptually; he knew them in his chest and knees and pen-holding fingers; such of that knowledge as pertained to what was happening in his novels infuses them, the rest is absent.

The purpose of a realistic fiction is to create in the reader's mind the illusion of real people doing possible things in a society which is part of the actual world — the imagined texture of natural experience. To create this illusion, DeMott knows as Richardson knew, talk about such matters as the War, Prohibition, or the depression is apt to be far less important than presenting the behavior of a socially ordinary family when the minister comes calling unexpectedly, or a grown boy's reaction to a reprimand at the dinner table from his harsh father before an outsider, or a timid girl's way of allowing a man beneath her to court her. It is by such ways, far more than through conceptualized social problems, that people actually know one another, even in our mixed-up, hyper-self-analytic, social-theorizing age; and it is certainly by such ways that a reader best knows the characters of fiction.

> Law is the clothes men wear
> Anytime, anywhere,
> Law is Good-morning and Good-night.

In good realistic fiction, the possible corners for theories of society to fit into are few and far between (I do not count Dostoevsky's novels as being primarily realistic): but society itself and its ways, accurately and complexly realized, is everywhere felt by the reader as naturally as the time of day.

The Snowfall

The classic landscapes of dreams are not
More pathless, though footprints leading nowhere
Would seem to prove that a people once
Survived for a little even here.

Fragments of a pathetic culture
Remain—the lost mittens of children,
And a single, bright, detasseled snowcap—,
Evidence of some frantic migration.

The landmarks are gone. Nevertheless
There is something familiar about this country.
Slowly now we begin to recall

The terrible whispers of our elders
Falling softly about our ears
In childhood, never believed till now.

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Notes of a Novelist

John Berry

The two preceding essays have considered the virtue and the art of the novel. John Berry's notes deal with the practice *of the novel.*

During the years when he was writing Krishna Fluting *(his first novel and winner of this year's Macmillan Fiction Award), Mr. Berry kept by him "a big, red spiral-bound notebook with the word 'Live-wire' printed on it in what looks like live wire." In all he made 400 entries—from which the numbered paragraphs below are selected—"in emergencies when I was disconnected, short-circuited or temporarily dead."*

Submitting these notes some weeks before the book was published, Mr. Berry wrote: "I'm quite aware that it may seem presumptuous to open archives before an event, especially one that may not be very noticeable." To the editor it seems that the insight these self-addressed memoranda give into the state of a mind engaged upon a large creative project removes any taint of presumption. In any case, the event has now occurred and Krishna Fluting *has been judged by others to be worth its author's travail.*

The central character of the novel is Peter Bruff, whose father was a Quaker missionary and whose mother was a Hindu. During the time of the book, he is preparing to kill a man-eating python; the hunt has brought him back to a place and to relationships which force him to resolve dilemmas within himself that stem largely from his mixed heritage. Aspects of this conflict are personified in three women: a Tibetan primitive, a Quaker from Pennsylvania and the sister of his dead Hindu friend. The action—of event and of the mind—is presided over by Krishna, the dancing god, and by the snake which is held by the people of the Himalayas to be the god's instrumentality.

3. I.F. says my writing is "objective," from the outside, unlike his. Says he can't get into my characters. (That's O.K. He's a nice guy, but obsessed with idea of getting *into*. Come to think of it, his characters don't defend themselves very well.) . . . .

8. C.P.S. says you gotta have Action, Suspense! That seems sort of cold-blooded, going at it backwards, like the sex in his novels. Ethical duty to be lustful, show you're a kind of man. Note, all yr stories have some action, suspense and a central problem. The setting helps create a sense of danger, the unfamiliar, unexpected, hence the atmosphere of legend, myth, miracle.

12. Keep building up these damn notes day by day, & before you know it the novel will be under way. Organize for a 2-year expedition into the Interior.

17. Each character should be *bang!* with some detail of speech, character, action, appearance. Li Po, Scaliger. *Artis Poeticae est non omnia dicere,* Faulkner contrary. L. H. Myers very contrary.

23. Make a General Outline (half a page perhaps), then a less general Outline, then try—or think of trying—a division by chapters. Don't worry too much about chapters, though; maybe you'll just want to write right through, as you would in a long short story or novella. Or you may just (right now) do a brief outline, & *commence.*

25. The role of omens: Consider certain minor & ambiguous incidents, such as the herd of great, evil, gangling camels that swooped down on me in the desert near Ahmedabad & I thought I was a goner, & the little naked black cannonball demon 2 feet high herding them with a tiny switch, saving me for further maneuvers by the All-India Orientalist Conference. Also the black dwarf who chased the black rooster through my hut, the night before the Evil One's visit.

28. *Re* Peter: I read somewhere Freud's (or another mind-doctor's) saying: The mark of an immature man is his determination (sic!) to die for a cause; of a mature man, his desire to live humbly for a cause. . . . Banal as it is, this may be a clue to P's crisis of maturity.

30. . . . Henry James has one hell of a time suppressing his intelligence. One of the great struggles.

33. Better to err on the side of simplicity in this novel, if you got to err. You can always complicate it afterwards, but you can never simplify what you have knotted. (What God hath. . . . only Alexander.)

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34. Consider admirable novels like *Catcher in the Rye*. They disclaim education, culture, "intelligence" even. Emotion & motion are what's what. Keep yr folk moving, uproot em, don't let em settle, they might get to thinking. They might think what you think.

35. J.F. had a point when he said the women in one of my stories talked high-falutin. Beware abstraction, brittleness, sophisticated dialogue. Let em talk about concrete things *in* which ideas are hid but not deliberately, just inevitably. Like possible babies. Try to show where your characters live.

45. . . . About ideas, be like a bank. Only make loans to a going concern.

53. Descriptions of characters: People look exactly like what they are—it's only a matter of being able to read them exactly.

71. How to proceed: Type out yr first draft recklessly, with majestic haste. Profusely, without economy.

73. If you could publish chapters separately, as they get written, it might be a sign that the book ain't integrated. In this book no chapt. will stand by itself. Too bad. . . .

86. Consider it this way: In yr 1st Draft, write the parts that interest you most, that intrigue, stimulate, amuse you. This way, certain advantages:

a.) You'll have staked out yr claim, made the leap, built the bridge or . . . . Framework. Then it will need just minor work to complete it.

b.) Patchy, it will have big spaces in betw. scenes where ideas for action, talk, relatings (thought of in the later stages of the work, in the maturity of yr experience of it) may be inserted to yr heart's content.

c.) You'll have done the big job before you've gone stale.

94. After you have got the blood flowing in the veins of the thing, you can get a *little* bit abstract (that's a part of it). Takes a strong blood to support thought. I.e., the thing has to be indubitably alive before it can think.

99. Keep in mind *Wuthering Heights* & Forster's comments on Prophecy. The underlying passion & mystery, not so much careful detail. Even confusion is permissible. The "humanity" is the great thing.

101. Hard to keep from blurting out everybody's motives at once. Don't do that, because motives change in the unfolding & can't be really known till the end. They come out in actions. Cagey does it.

105. Yr impulse so far has been to pose problems & solve them energetically on the spot. This is a short-story habit. I have detected it several times. Must learn to be very leisurely, to play waiting game, to let the answers come as it were reluctantly. You don't seem to realize that there's a Novel on.

115. "Expansion. That is the idea the novelist must cling to. Not completion. Not rounding off but opening out." Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*. Thinks Pattern (form) achieved at expense of "humanity" of the novel. "The face of Prophecy is towards unity, whereas fantasy glances about." Quotes Sta. Caterina da Siena, "The sea is in the fish & the fish is in the sea."

131. Kipling despised & had no understanding of the Bengali, knew only the Northwest & the Muslim, nothing of Hindus, the great relativists. Forster a bit thwarted by Bengalis, too, though he never *judges*. D. H. Lawrence might have understood them if he'd been in a mood to kick against their Saxon opposites—cf. his satanic sensibility in the poem about the Estrucans w their "drooping" noses & slinky feet, lovely, supersubtle chaps (vs. those American-Roman bastards). I was once a Bengali for about 20 minutes. It was delightful, prob. unique in history. Then all of a sudden they remembered that I had no proper color or caste & belonged to a bloody out-group. Still I am very grateful.

141. At this point I begin to have grave doubts. Have just re-read *A Passage to India*. It is essentially a book, & within the book is essentially a theme: a platonic love-affair between two men, Aziz and Fielding—love, estrangement & reconciliation, all that. (Far-reaching friendships always romantic.) The forces of India & England are marshalled behind each of them, betraying them. There are two sides, & one set of go-betweens (the Moores, Irish-mystic, volatile). At the end of his great book, F. prophesies marriage between East & West, to occur about now, now that the British have gone. . . . Try again to have a clear conception of what yr novel is about. It is true, it takes up where Forster's book left off—"Revelation," in this special sense. The problem then was "understanding" of brown & white under the British. (This concept of understanding is fundamentally romantic, in my opinion. It means *love*, which exists only between individuals, and they're going to have it or not have it, and to hell with groups. Groups can't love, they can only prevent love.) Now the British have cleared out, where is this intermarriage, the next step? Hens' teeth, & snaggly! Sex don't bring people together necessarily. . . . Your book is about *people*, not to demonstrate a thesis.

146. Went to see Borst last night, laid my Problems before him & Madame. Among other things, they said you gotta *rip out* that secondary plot of Tino & Rosière, & Jim Chen, relegate them to foils. The secondary plot is another novel or novelette in itself. (B. is very right

The Fox

(From the Welsh of Dafydd ap Gwilym)

Yesterday, with Ovid's course
In mind, I stood awaiting
(And woe on him who doesn't)
My lover under the trees.
Her waywardness made me weep;
Then I saw when I looked up
An ape-shape where least welcome,
A red fox—no friend of dogs—
Sitting there on his haunches
By his den, like a tame beast.

My expensive bow of yew
I took in my hands and aimed,
Meaning, with a long arrow,
Like a brave man, to shoot him.
Attempting a shot, I pulled,
But not fully past my cheek—
Alas, the cruel misfortune!
My precious bow snapped in three.

I was angered, not frightened,
By this fox, this paltry bear;
This lover of fat chicken,
Of silly fowl, and bird flesh;
No follower of the horn,
Harsh his own cry and carol;
Red-cheeked across stony ground;
Ape-like among stupid geese;
A scourer of the meadows;
A dog-shape searching for geese;
Focus of rooks on the ridge;
Glowing leaper of acres;
Signal for crow and magpie,
Like the prophesied dragon;
Outrager, chewer of plump hen,
Proverbial fleece, flesh of fire;
Piercer of the earth's shut door,
Lantern for that unlit cell;
A bronze bow on weightless feet,
And his jaw like bloody tongs.

Not easy to follow him,
With his home leading to hell;
Direly may he be captured,
He heads the field in pursuit;
Fierce his rush, leaper of gorse,
Leopard, a dart at his arse.

D. Huws

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when he is right. He is like Montaigne.) Conclusion: Do the whole damn thing over again. But take a good look & see whether this may be yr chance to revise what you've got, since the flow is shut off anyway, for the time being.

147. This is the first note towards reconstruction after painful discovery that the novel was going wrong. Hold mirror to its mouth, see if it fogs up.

150. India nearly destroyed England. Destroyed her as a great power, anyway: Educated her, made her subtle, mellow —honeycombed, "shot through, rotten with intellect," as Spengler says. The usual case of youth "corrupted" by age. It takes a barbarian to rule, or some one with a streak of barbarism in him. A truly enlightened man would never presume to govern others, because he would be sure to see his adversary's point & betray his constituents, wards or whatever. And would he presume to govern himself? If anyone. Probably by some sort of compromise, laissez faire. . . . What an effort to rule India! Poor Indians now! That climate weakens both the Will & the Idea.

164. At this point it is necessary to make a new General Outline, followed by new Chapter Outlines. That is, you must re-tell yr story before re-writing it. This writing must fit (Procrustes) a crude, central, barbaric force which drives the plan—a simple plan, based on Dante—sex, service, spirit. The Three Who Neither Come Nor Go. (But Baudelaire, *Journaux intimes:* "Il y a de la charité dans l'amour d'un homme intelligent pour une femme bête, comme il y a de la pédérastie dans l'amour du même homme pour une femme intelligente.") Actually all three women are present in every part, as all 3 modalities of consciousness are simultaneously present in life.

204. I think Chanchal upholds the position of Dr. Aziz, that there can be no union of spirit between East & West. . . . Peter & Indira do achieve union, both physical & spiritual, they do understand each other, because they are superior in human scope. That is my answer to Aziz. (And my opportunistic idealism, probably—i.e., I am callous, I don't care a damn about East & West, just individuals; but I think I'm right in the idea.)

210. Liliu binds him through the power of the flesh, Irene binds him through the power of idealism, but Indira alone truly seduces him, because she confers freedom upon him.

236. I can't think of a woman without seeing her as beautiful somehow. Men too. I marvel at them. This is a limitation. (How come evil doesn't uglify everybody? No, but Monica is pretty ugly, & so was the Familiar Stranger.) L. H. Myers, *The Root and the Flower,* likes beautiful women & noble men. I admire his perfection, but can't just can't. We have different ideals. Myers is the connoisseur of subtle gradations, thought-processes, textures, all the sensory caresses. He is explicit about everything, searching souls like Murasaki, turning their pockets inside out; "universal" like Mabun Das. He tells us absolutely everything. . . . One thing we have in common: an invented India; only he's cagier than I am—puts it way back in the time af Akbar, so old India hands can't say "That isn't the way it is at *all!*" But there's Kafka's *Amerika.*

241. Stalled again on p. 100. Too lethargic to get interested in Chapt. XI or any future Chapters indicated, having exhausted everything in my imagination. It is finished. Abstractly it is finished.

So do this: Outline the rest of the

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Chapters in as much detail as you can summon up at the time without too much discomfort. Then you will have a succession of pious receptacles nicely lined up & waiting for your moods & juices if any ever again. The Muse of Prose. Ugh.

243. Waiting for the Muse might not be a bad idea at that. You are not a diurnal machine. Why do you have conniption fits every time the machine (a fiction) shuts down? No perspective. *In general* you are producing. Tease, titillate, wait....

250. The Python motif has become a unifying, deepening force. I have confidence to continue.

251. Jim Chen, American, is crypto-Confucian. He & Irene the Quaker are both exponents of the Middle Way, i.e., ethics. Big diff. though. The Chinese never could get into a trance.

256. Beware of wisdom! Characters cannot bear very much reality. Foolish authors make wise characters.

258. Dickens trusted his characters, loved them, gave himself to them without reservation. They gave him a workout, but never betrayed him.

267. The home stretch, first draft. I am excited now that the ending is so dramatic & ties the whole together so beautifully. It will be a fine book, well made, good form, though not tragedy.... OK, this is the situation *now:* Excited by prospect of it whole. Have trouble writing it. Why? Changes in character & story have occurred as Draft 1. proceeded, making inconsistencies. I am inhibited from writing at this late stage of Draft 1. because I see how my continuing inventiveness has made for these inconsistencies to be resolved in the next draft, & I feel that whatever I write now will also be subject to change when I do the next draft. I have no confidence—the process is one of sliding panels, alternatives, unexpected directions, the unpredictable....

273. What happens to Irene is comparable to the fate of Paphnuce in *Thaïs* & to that of the Preacher in *Rain:* the Saint brought low by creature-love. She is high, she falls far. A tiny flaw.... Wish I cd help her, but I can't.

298. "It may be said to live like a soldier but not as a soldier, figuratively but not literally, to be allowed to live in short symbolically, spells true freedom."—Thomas Mann, *Felix Krull.*

"Il n'existe que trois êtres respectables: le prêtre, le guerrier, le poète: Savoir, tuer, et créer." Baudelaire, *Journaux intimes.*

My purpose in copying down le above, nonsense & all, is this: The novel has to do with Freedom. These two quotations, esp. Mann's, connect Ritual with Freedom. Mann's is a profound & original insight. Take it further—as, e.g., towards the *Gita,* which prescribes *dharma* as the ritual wherein alone we are free. (Cf. Hegel, to will the laws that govern us, or wotever—that don't sound so good, matter of fact, unless you invent 'em first & reserve the right to change yr mind.) Baudelaire's quip reminds of the triad, Vishnu, Brahma, Siva. To what extent are these 3 functions represented in the 3 women? (Is there an Allegory in this tale? That's bad. Inexcusable self-consciousness, if so. Watch out.)

306. Ford Madox Ford in *The Good Soldier* manages control by staying *off* the subject, putting off his revelations impossibly, letting them drip out a bit at a time; avoids intense scenes (not always). The language is of a low grade, purposely, so it won't run away with him, because his one purpose is to perfect the big form, the whole novel. (There is a man who knows how to keep prose & poetry separate.) Beauty, wisdom, perspicacity, etc. wd have unbalanced it, made ungainly knobs. So he purposely keeps his material weak, tractable, in order to manipulate it, keep it all of a piece. (Flaubert too?) What I want to learn from *The Good Soldier,* that splendid book: Subordinate & stretch out all info about the past, till it saturates the present.

310. What has Krishna accomplished? He has drawn out the true natures of the people involved, without reducing their illimitable complexity; so there is what you see, a number of karmas made explicit. Seeing it is one thing, understanding it is another. Sometimes mutually exclusive. Don't be too eager to understand. Never get rich that way. Premature wisdom hard to shake.

329. Liliu is really rather insane. This may explain her peculiar charm & the difficulty you have in getting into her skin, also her evil (aggressive affirmation of her subjectivity, uncommunicable, Old Night), & why P must leave her. Can't you use yr own psychological experience to understand her? Paranoiac? Women damn hard to understand—got to keep reminding yourself they're women, not odd men. Maybe easier to understand an abnormal woman. Freud. Or maybe you miss the point, wie am ersten Tag. Look & love, don't strain your brain. Be impressionable & you can't go wrong.

332. Doldrums. Try to get new impulse by considering Part III as a separate action (almost)—the Snake Shoot—building it up—ACTION!

333. This book ain't like *Green Mansions* like that guy said it was. It's a beast-hunt, a dragon-shoot, like *Moby Dick,* like *The Old Man and the Sea,* though not as pure a book by any means. If there's allegory in it, I hope it isn't clear to anyone. (Maybe I'll allow myself to think about that some day.) Myth a denial of allegory. No arguing with myth.

334. Easier to write than not write, the discomfort being there in either case. More exactly, it is harder, it is more painful not to write than to write.

Accusers and Pardoners

R. V. Cassill

"RADIX MALORUM EST CUPIDITAS," said the Pardoner who rode with the Canterbury Pilgrims.

"The root of evil is conformity," say many popular books of the last decade — *White Collar, The Lonely Crowd, The Status Seekers* and several others with titles that stick in the mind like slogans.

Surely both these precepts are dandy and familiar, their origins impeccable and their favorable reception guaranteed. Before Emerson said it, others were telling Americans to be self-reliant. We're still grateful for any help we can get in living up to this ideal.

Nevertheless we recall that a purpose lurked and twisted under the moral covering of the story told by Chaucer's Pardoner. A second look at his tale showed him to be a prime apologist for the Prince of Darkness. Other examples, even some drawn from our secular democracy, could show that a tyranny over the mind has no better allies than those who

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R. V. CASSILL is a novelist and short-story writer. Five of his stories appeared in Fifteen by Three *(New Directions). Mr. Cassill teaches at Columbia University and The New School for Social Research.*

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sell easy answers to hard questions. So a second look at the new books that bid us flee conformity may be in order, just to make sure that their purpose is as good as their moral.

SUPPOSE a voice, not exactly from heaven but from a respectable elevation, were to charge us, "You have sinned against passion and truth . . . against Eros and Pallas Athena, and not by any heavenly intervention, but by the ordinary course of nature those allied deities will be avenged." We know there are secular Pardoners on hand, false critics, who would prompt us to answer, "I admit I've been doing a little togetherness on the sly. I conformed!" Or to confess, "I was a Mom!" But whoever told us we could cop a plea with the watchful gods, or with the ordinary course of nature, for that matter?

Suppose some foreigner (denied "intellectual responsibility" by the *Partisan Review* troop, but still able to watch from a vantage point) should remind us, "President Eisenhower has counted in tens of millions the innocent victims of the Rosenbergs; each of you feels already dead in some future war; these are the deaths which demanded death . . . for the ones who stole the atomic secret.

"Unhappily, when seen from Europe, you do not appear to be either innocent or dead. . . ."

If, after nearly seven years, that pricks conscience too painfully, we can always agree with Norman Mailer that "The Rosenberg case was boring."

Why not cop a plea? If we doubt that the gods exist, why shouldn't we doubt that the ordinary course of nature exists or ought to excite our interest?

I have no wish to categorize a group of writers that includes C. Wright Mills, David Riesman, Alan Harrington, A. C. Spectorsky, William H. Whyte, Jr. and Vance Packard as all being secular Pardoners. Some of them do considerably better service than peddling as relics the thighbone of a great idea or pieces of the veil worn by the Founding Fathers.

I would only like to suggest that

"A master's work—in control of its subject, in the style of presentation, in the excitement of learning and wonder it conveys about a world unknown."
—THEODORE H. WHITE

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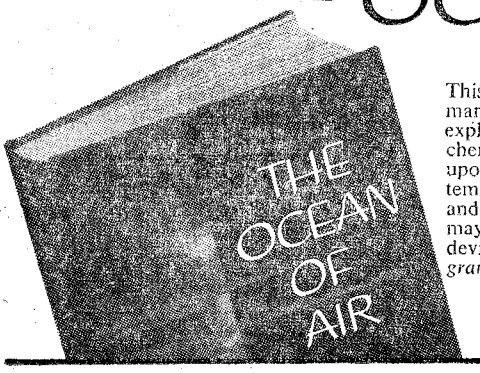

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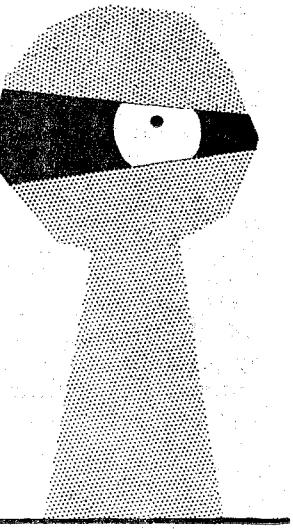

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all these authors (except perhaps Mills) represent a "style of thinking," to use Karl Mannheim's phrase; and, by making some observations on that style, raise the question of whether these books are really intended to heal us.

A style of thinking is partly definable by its exclusions, by the mere citation of ideas which are, within its limits, unthinkable. And we must remember, first of all, that these books come to us in the maturity of a social process in which ideas have been treated as commodities — and where, as a consequence, that which becomes unsaleable becomes presently unthinkable.

TAKE an idea from a moralist on the grand scale for an example. "'What if my whole life has really been wrong?'" asks Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyich. The "very justification of his life held him fast and prevented his moving forward, and it caused him the most torment of all." That's *hard,* as Faustus said of the divine laws, but *The Lonely Crowd* can reassure you that Ivan Ilyich's predicament need not be yours. Ivan, we read there, was an "inside dopester." Do not be an inside dopester and the laws will soften for you.

But if I should think that mad old Tolstoy meant you and me to see ourselves in Ivan and to believe that only in death could we transcend the already fatal formation of our lives — then, after the private shudder is mastered, I would note that such an idea of transcendence is not to be found on sale in the non-fiction on our Better Book counters.

Suppose that Alan Harrington, whose central moral image of "the crystal palace"* is lifted from Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground,* had also taken the thorny paradox of that story, had pictured himself as being "a spiteful man" like the Dostoevskian narrator who wants to stick his tongue out at *any and all* enduring palaces of the ideal. What Foundation would subsidize a book by a spiteful man? What sane publisher would sponsor it?

But, with the spite removed from the original formula of the idea, Harrington's book lies comfortably on a Procrustean bed that could only reach the knees and elbows of Dostoevsky's terrifying riddle.

Suppose the author of *The Lonely Crowd* had identified his ideal of *autonomy* as *immorality.* Nietzsche says proudly enough that "autonomous and moral are mutually exclusive terms." That kind of pride is no more saleable than spite.

Suppose that Mills had based *The Causes of World War III* on the hard thesis that it is already too late to prevent the holocaust. (He says it isn't if enough of us avoid the pitfalls of the tragic view. If we "transcend" ourselves.)

Unsaleable.

Unsaleable first of all to the keepers of the Procrustean bed — editors, publishers and foundations. But no doubt they are right in assuming, too, that untrimmed ideas are unsaleable to that public for whom they act as entrepreneurs. How many people would pay to go to bed with an idea bigger than themselves? It would be undignified, and to pay for the privilege of yielding dignity has become unthinkable, has it not?

By noting certain exclusions, then, we may infer that the style common to the books of popular sociology is one in which a premium is placed on communication — *after* certain great ideas that were once or somewhere communicable among men have become unthinkable. In turn this means that communication tends to be the sounding of already familiar signals (shibboleths or slogans flattering the preconceptions of the book buyer) rather than an attempt to reveal what is generally unknown in our novel situation. It is symptomatic of the wish to communicate at all costs that certain illustrations, allusions and authorities have been kept in service in most of the books I am talking about. The novel *Kitty Foyle* becomes a tired old work horse while a hundred better novels about life in these states are never drawn upon at all. "The Protestant Ethic" (hiss!), Dr. Dichter (the Fu Manchu of Motivational Research), *1984* (otherwise known as the Book of Revelations), and well-surveyed Park Forest keep reappearing like popular recipes in the

Life in the Crystal Palace (Knopf, $4.50), published this month.

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cookbooks issued by various publishers. One is not surprised to find in *The Status Seekers* the same less than oracular quote from Saint George Orwell's *Coming up for Air* that Mills used within the first few pages of *White Collar*. But it might be really surprising to find any of them tackling — for example — Faulkner's story "Golden Land" or Dreiser's novel *The Bulwark* in discussing the history of conscience in twentieth-century America.

Is there, in the present system by which we disseminate ideas, an iron law to the effect that success in communicating what no one needs very much to be told means obscuring what is truly needed? I don't know. But I think it unreasonable to expect, in this situation, that we will soon find a book of social analysis in which a concept like *transcendence* has more scope than C. Wright Mills gives it. (I believe that Mr. Mills intends the term to mean "working harder for peace and social justice." That is, of course, a decent idea as well as a saleable one. But it is also a fair example of what confirms and narrows the secularization that he announces and, at his convenience, deplores.)

If such limits to the style of thinking as I have suggested are indeed the broadest we can expect in this field, the individual reader is left the task of separating, with less than common tolerance, what is wholesome there from the cheap pardons. Salvage depends on rejecting out of hand the merely pious pretense that every book "on the side of the angels" has power to heal the anxieties to which it is addressed.

Surely it must be plain that the anti-huckster huckster is no more an ally in the good old cause than the plain huckster. That the former has no tangible goods to sell does not mean that he is disinterested. If you get a sound pair of shoes in the bargain, it may be better to"buy beautiful feet" *(The Hidden Persuaders)* at the behest of some journeyman advertiser than to buy from a superficial critic the conviction that now you know where to look for the hidden persuasions.

Vance Packard like some of the others I have mentioned, has been to the great feast of social science jargon and stolen the scraps. He will cry (more like the Summoner of the *Canterbury Tales* than the Pardoner, perhaps) "depth," "manipulation" and "status claim" in a most entertaining if unenlightening way. Between scaring you with how awfully much Dr. Dichter knows about you and reassuring you with his own *dichter-freiheit*, he will take you a very short trip for your money. I think he is fun when he gets off a line like "The New England aristocrat clings to his cracked shoes through many re-solings and his old hat." You can hardly buy "your Declaration of Independence," as the publishers advertised it, cheaper than by forking out for *The Status Seekers*.

Spectorsky's *The Exurbanites* is entertaining, too, and funny by intent. Mr. Spectorsky knows that the language and the posture of the social scientist can be structured into an amusing artifice. *The Exurbanites* is a new kind of novel without a hero, swift, satiric, detached, laying no particular claims to realism, but affording a considerable measure of aesthetic satisfaction.

IT SEEMS to me, though, that we can take *The Organization Man* by William H. Whyte, Jr. as seriously as it asks to be taken. Its opening definition of "the Protestant Ethic" on which the author must have intended to structure his thesis is, seriously, a stunning piece of social history-into-journalism legerdemain. I presume that his definition and "authority" for it were squeezed from Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

From large scholarship and an at least fruitful bias, Weber tried to show "whose intellectual child" was the rational thought of capitalism. There is absolutely no question of a "chicken or the egg" riddle in Weber's essay. But Whyte recklessly tries to riddle with the truth, writing, "Whether the Protestant Ethic preceded capitalism, as Max Weber argued, or whether it grew up as a consequence. . . ." Which latter alternative must mean, if it means anything, that the Spirit of Capitalism spaketh and said: "Do not com-

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mit adultery . . . sell whatever thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven."

Milton, Weber, Jesus Christ, Thou shouldst be living at this hour, when a little education has become so permissive a thing!

Still, it may be carping to point out that Mr. Whyte started to build his edifice on the sands of a misrepresentation. Most of his opinions would seem to be a matter of taste rather than a consequence of principle or reason, and hence so lacking in fundamental coherence as to make a skeletal thesis unnecessary. When he discovers for himself that the material he has chosen contradicts what he wants to show, he says (p. 183, Anchor ed.) that he is "happy" it does. Could anyone ask for a softer sell than that? He has a lot of ideas that all men of good will in his position would certainly wish to espouse —like, all the colleges are going to hell because there's a bunch of educationalist nuts down on the liberal arts; like, you have no real privacy in an architectural monstrosity such as Park Forest; like, a man mustn't let any one organization take over his soul. You may not agree with Mr. Whyte's recollection that when he got out of college in 1939 the world scene was much brighter than it is in our organized times, but if you're an organization man who feels that his crystal palace is just an air-conditioned bureaucracy after all, you're bound to like Whyte's earnest admonition to "fight."

It must be reported that he qualifies his inspirational cry. You must fight—but not too hard.

Perhaps what the Moloch corporations needed was a sort of spiritually tasteful gymnasium where a man could go a few fast rounds, work up a nice sweat, and not show any marks afterward. Perhaps, in *The Organization Man,* they've got one.

Radix malorum est conformitas! One of the motives for decrying the general conformity of Americans is—as any waiting-room spread of popular magazines will evidence—to help the great mass-media artists behind the scenes sell "non-conformist" personalities: Jack Paar, Alexander King, Jack Kerouac, Mike Wallace, Mort Sahl, Joseph Welch, Marlon Brando. And as H. Marshall McLuhan has pointed out, if you find a tendency flourishing in the popular culture of this country, you will find it also prospering among the intellectual elite. In *The Lonely Crowd* we read, "Surely the great mass-media artists, including the directors, writers, and others behind the scenes who 'create' and promote the artists, make an important contribution to autonomy." If any other contemporary guiding force receives equal praise in the book, I am sorry to say I did not find it, though travel agents, hotel men, resort directors, and interior decorators are conceded potentially comparable virtue. "My effort . . . has been directed to closing the gap generally believed to exist between high culture and mass culture," the author says. When I saw in which direction he meant to close this same gap I ran back to my peer-group—friends and neighbors—begging "Other-direct me." That Mr. Riesman is serious in his valuation of these on- and off-scene heroes of culture seems to be suggested by his persistent habit of descending from skillfully managed and colorful generalities to illustrate the particulars of American life as they were shown in some formula film.

"It's the inner life that counts," E. M. Forster used to say. And he used to say, "Only connect." But I think the glazed vocabulary of *The Lonely Crowd* precludes a connection between the inner life (be it only stupid pain or angry frustration) and the social gesture. "The inner-directed person has early incorporated a psychic gyroscope. . . ." The other-directed person's "control equipment, instead of being like a gyroscope is like a radar." Certain colleges "turn out" more artists and scientists than others.

The point of mentioning these mechanically derived metaphors is not to show that Riesman mistakes symbol for substance. He says, "The metaphor of the gyroscope . . . must not be taken literally. . . . The inner-directed man . . . can receive and utilize certain signals from outside. . . . His pilot is not quite automatic."

The point is that this style (of language, of thought) meshes flawlessly with the styles educed by advertising or the mass-media generally, and is absolutely inconsistent with the traditional conceptual language of humane letters. This style is perfect for adding a flourish of highbrow interpretation to Jerry Wald's movie derivation from *The Sound and the Fury* but would be helpless as a Univac if engaged to interpret Faulkner's original.

No wonder that progressively Mr. Riesman must find us progressively apathetic. To paraphrase Mannheim, "His style measures what it is able to measure rather than what we want to know about." His thought,

The Reviewer to Himself

Hold it a second, Oracle! Just contemplate
The lesser verses of The Great —
As, Yeats's "To Ireland in the Coming Times"
With its "færies, dancing under the moon,"
Its "footfalls," and its "Druid tune,"
Or Hardy's "Lady Vi" and its pretzel-bent rhymes
(Hardy invented the word "elbowment"
In despair of finding a rhyme for "moment"),
Or, speaking of rhymes, Coleridge's "rich" and "bitch"
And his two worst lines (O Genius, where thy spark?):
"Is the night chilly and dark?
The night is chilly, but not dark."
I do not mention Auden's "intolerable neural itch,"
Eliot on Christmas, Cummings on Reds,
Wordsworth on donkeys, Hopkins on newlyweds,
Housman on "lads" all buried or hanging by their necks,
Or Millay, all shattered with shudders and shivers and Sex. . . .

Oracle, remember, should your typewriter grow acidic,
The Muse flames and fades at whim, asks clearance of no critic.

M. L. Rosenthal

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encumbered in such language, cannot accommodate the pathos of real people any more than it can imply their individual wisdom, folly, or resentment of the institutions that have failed to shape a spiritual life for them. He contrives a sociology of wind-up toys—very ingenious, but ingenuity is easier when responsibility to the subject is cast aside.

He builds his case on an appearance of apathy that many have noted. But is our well-fed, overstimulated, frustrated populace apathetic? Could it be? Or is it only unresponsive when the wrong demands are made of it? It is a terrible and dangerous thing to judge Philomela by her silences.

IF we looked through another peephole than Mr. Riesman's we might see that *out there,* on the invisible end of the TV circuits, in the voiceless pits of theatres, or reading *The Lonely Crowd,* people are making cruel fun of "the great artists." They may be out there sharpening their gully knives.

Probably not. No cry of "Out with your gully knives!" is likely to be heard from a citizenry outraged by the thinness of its cultural soup. Spiteful children may scribble the signature of their disaffection on the posters by the masters of the popular arts, but overt rebellions of good or evil are hardly conceivable at this late date. Even the famous revolt in Hungary prospered (if that is the right word) far more as propaganda in the mass media than it did in the streets of Budapest.

Individual or collective, rebellion is almost certain to be subsumed in the machinery of power where ideas, like actions, are compounded into a homogeneity that has already outlawed a host of precious human possibilities.

The only chance of transcending this homogeneity must surely be in discovering the extent to which it has deprived our individual lives of significance, facing up to our peculiar tragedy. I believe that C. Wright Mills knows that this must be done. "It is one great task of social studies to describe the larger economic and political situation in terms of its meaning for the inner life and external career of the individual," he wrote some years ago in *White Collar.* I think he has made large contributions to this task. But I think his very anger, his well-meaning zeal, prevent him from seeing it through. He turns back and minimizes the task he defines—because he is afraid that men will sit down and fold their hands in despair if they perceive the tragedy and futility of their lives.

I do not think that is so. My experience says it is not so. Yeats's *Lapis Lazuli* says it is not so, and on the level of simple factual statement about the nature of man (aesthetic considerations aside) I trust what Yeats says and do not trust Mills.

Yeats says that men, "if worthy their prominent part in the play will not break up their lines to weep" whatever the prospects of their practical success. I think that order of truth explains and encourages all men who, in their different ways, may be trying to prevent another war or the further impoverishment of our social life. On the other hand, Mills can only encourage those who agree with his program and can explain, at best, only a few dubiously practical steps for achieving it.

It does not help to call those who admit or express the tragic view "the literary counterpart of the cult of objectivity in the social sciences" —as Mills does, making the latter sound worse than it is—or to say paraphrastically "they are betrayed by what is false within them." This is to make bad poetry out of good and leads straight on to the rant, self-righteousness, and the internal contradictions that mar his books. (For an example of the latter—he tries to pin "responsibility" on the "irresponsible men" of the power elite, an undertaking that would require not only a more precise language than his but a theory of power in the modern state which he fails to provide.)

In *The Causes of World War III* he says, "To ask and answer the question 'What is to be done?' is not enough. We must also specify who is to do it." That seems reasonable enough, but then, proceeding as if to specification, he specifies—the United States. Following this specifi-

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cation which is no specification at all, he offers eighteen "guidelines" by which it, they or we might press for peace. Among them is this": . . . the United States should . . . offer to share fully the costs of . . . an international fleet of airliners for the use of scientists, intellectuals, and artists. . . ." That's a delightful prescription, but I see little more reason to suppose that it would foster peace than that the United States or any of its specific branches or groups of citizens would make such an offer.

The emptiness of his argument at such turns serves only to discredit his thesis that reason can master fate and reminds us again that reason can never seize remote goals until it has mastered the proximate.

Even so, there is a genuine and stalwart poetry in Mills at his best. The poetry is in the pity if nowhere else. And if one is exasperated by his growl and overstatement ("Macy's hurts Mr. Mills," someone said), it seems likely that his anger defines the area in which we may hope to claim our transcendence, even when his thought does not.

The Salinger Industry

George Steiner

WRITING in *The Nation* in March 1957, Mr. David L. Stevenson expressed surprise at the fact that Salinger is "rarely acknowledged by the official guardians of our literary virtue." He can now rest assured. The heavy guns are in action along the entire critical front. Salinger's unique role in contemporary letters has been accorded full recognition:

> Salinger is probably the most avidly read author of any serious pretensions in his generation. (Arthur Mizener, *Harpers,* February, 1959)

> There are, I am convinced, millions of young Americans who feel closer to Salinger than to any other writer. (Granville Hicks, *Saturday Review,* July 25, 1959)

> The only Post-War fiction unanimously approved by contemporary literate American youth consists of about five hundred pages by Jerome David Salinger. (F. L. Gwynn and J. L. Blotner, *The Fiction of J. D. Salinger,* University of Pittsburgh Press, 1958)

Obviously, critics are interested to find out why this should be so. Salinger has caught with uncanny precision the speech and thought-rhythms of the young. "The talk of his characters is, so to speak, righter than right" (Hicks). He can make a kind of poetry of "the simplest occasion," giving the shapes of art to the swift, raw, undigested materials of urban and college life (Mizener). The crisis of a Salinger fable makes the reader aware of how we are "members all of the lonely crowd" (Stevenson). Salinger is the spokesman for the corner-of-the-mouth rebelliousness of the postwar generation; he expresses the "Ivy League Rebellion of the Fifties" (Maxwell Geismar). He speaks for the nonconformists who resist the old betrayals of rhetoric and illusion. As Ibsen would put it, he rejects the false "claims of the ideal" (William Wiegand, *Chicago Review,* II).

One might have thought that that was more than enough to account for the success of a good minor writer with an audience which is, by any traditional tokens, largely illiterate. But no. Where the Higher Criticism is at work more portentous issues are invoked. Writing in the *Western Humanities Review* (Spring, 1956), Professors Heiserman and Miller tell us that *The Catcher in the Rye* belongs to an ancient narrative tradition, "perhaps the most profound in western fiction":

> It is, of course, the tradition of the Quest. We use the medieval term because it signifies a seeking after what is tremendous, greater than the love of a woman. . . . Holden's Quest takes him outside society; yet the grail he seeks is the world and the grail is full of love. . . . Huck Finn had the Mississippi and at the end of the Mississippi he had the wild

GEORGE STEINER is a writer and political journalist at present attached to Princeton University. His Tolstoy or Dostoevsky *was published by Knopf earlier this year.*

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west beyond Arkansas. The hero of *The Waste Land* had Shantih, the peace which passes human understanding. Bloom had Molly and his own ignorance; Dedalus had Paris and Zurich. But for Holden, there is no place to go.

In the course of exegesis, Salinger's young lout is also compared with Alyosha Karamazov, Aeneas, Ulysses, Gatsby, Ishmael, Hans Castorp and Dostoevsky's Idiot, and always rather to his own advantage.

WITH Salinger firmly enthroned in the critical pantheon, the gates were open to the happy hunt for literary influences and analogues. In the *American Quarterly* (IX, 1957), Professor Edgar Branch rightly pointed out the extent to which *The Catcher* is related to *Huckleberry Finn*. "Holden is truly a kind of latter-day, urbanized Huck." Fair enough, and the comparison itself is high praise for any modern novel. But we plunge deeper: "Salinger's viewpoint also draws upon a mystical sense merely inchoate in Mark Twain's imagination" (poor fellow); it has an "awesome relevance to our collective civilized fate." A piece by Martin Green in the *Chicago Review* (Winter, 1958) starts out more modestly. Green shrewdly observes that there is between the heroes of Salinger and those of Kingsley Amis a suggestive similarity. Both, as Kenneth Tynan had seen earlier, reflect angry youth and an abdication from politics and idealism. But again, the summits beckon:

> Modern literature — the literature of Hemingway, Faulkner, Robert Penn Warren, Greene, Waugh, McCullers, Bowen, Buechner, etc. — I trust is now over. I trust that in these two new writers we see at last a positive, life-giving alternative. . . . Salinger also *creates* life.

In short: Salinger's tales are "comic masterpieces" (Charles Kaplan, *College English*, XVIII, 1956), and they may safely be compared with the classic in literature. The scholarly apparatus which such stature implies is also forthcoming. Professors Gwynn and Blotner provide a "Check-List of J. D. Salinger's Fiction" and a list of "Critical Studies of Salinger's Fiction." They devote a learned monograph to their man and come up with a pronouncement which caps the entire Salinger Industry:

> The problem he [Salinger] has set himself in this last period is no less than the utilization of transcendental mysticism in satiric fiction, something (as far as we know) never attempted before by an American writer, and by only a few in Western literature.

Roll of drums; exeunt Cervantes, Chekhov and other lesser souls.

In themselves, all these pomposities and exaggerations are of no great importance. But they do point to some of the things that are seriously wrong with contemporary American criticism.

First of all, they get Salinger's work badly out of focus and could do him a great deal of harm if he were so misguided as to read them (most probably he does not). Mr. Jerome David Salinger is neither Molière nor Chekhov. He is not yet Mark Twain (and by a long shot). Why should he be? He is a gifted and entertaining writer with one excellent short novel and a number of memorable stories to his credit. He has a marvelous ear for the semi-literate meanderings of the adolescent mind. He has caught and made articulate the nervous, quizzical, rough-edged spirit of the moment. He very obviously touches on major or traditional motifs: the failure of the bridges that are meant to link young and old, the mending power of a general, non-sexual love between human beings (something between friendship and compassion). "For Esmé—With Love and Squalor" is a wonderfully moving story, perhaps the best study to come out of the war of the way in which the greater facts of hatred play havoc in the private soul. "The Laughing Man" and "Down at the Dinghy" are fine sketches of the bruised, complicated world of children. But neither holds a candle to Joyce's *Araby* or to the studies of childhood in Dostoevsky. Of late, Salinger has begun parodying Salinger. His most recent chronicle of the Glass family is a piece of shapeless self-indulgence (*The New Yorker* is notoriously vulnerable to the delights of sheer length). The writer himself, moreover, is interest-

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ing. He has adopted a T. E. Lawrence technique of partial concealment. He does not sign books at Brentano's nor teach creative writing at Black Mountain. "I was with the Fourth Division during the war. I almost always write about very young people." That's about all he wants us to know.

Salinger's virtues account for part of his vast appeal. But only for part. The rest is less exalted. The young like to read about the young. Salinger writes *briefly* (no need to lug home a big book or something, Lord help us, not available in paperback). He demands of his readers nothing in the way of literacy or political interest (in my time, college bull-sessions raged over *Doctor Faustus;* but that meant having heard of Hitler or Nietzsche or being dimly aware of a past writer called Goethe). Salinger flatters the very ignorance and moral shallowness of his young readers. He suggests to them that formal ignorance, political apathy and a vague *tristesse* are positive virtues. They open the heart to mystic intimations of love. This is where his cunning and somewhat shoddy use of Zen comes in. Zen is in fashion. People who lack even the rudiments of knowledge needed to read Dante or the nerve required by Schopenhauer, snatch up the latest paperback on Zen. "Salinger's constant allusions to the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Ramakrishna, Chuang-tsu, and the rest are only efforts to find alternate ways of expressing what his stories are about," says Mizener. I wonder. They are more likely a shrewd insight into the kind of half-culture which the present college generation revels in. Twelfth-century madrigals are bound to come soon into the lives of Franny or Zooey or the late lamented Seymour.

THESE are the main facts. Why is literary criticism so determined to get them out of proportion?

First, there is a matter of language. Having added to the legacy of Germanic scholarship the jargon of the New Criticism, many American academic critics are no longer able to write with plainness or understatement. They have a vested interest in the complex and the sublime. (Hence Messrs. Heiserman and Miller's capitalized Quest and their pious statement, "We use the medieval term.". . .) A new, probably rather minor achievement comes along, and at once critical language soars to sublimity. The result is a serious devaluation of critical coin. If one writes about Salinger as do Gwynn and Blotner, just how is one to write about Cervantes or Turgenev? The entire sense of discrimination between values which should be implicit in a critic's language goes lost.

Secondly, there is a matter of economics. The young assistant or associate professor must publish in order to get advancement or to obtain one of those Fulbrights, Guggenheims or Fords which mark the ascent to Parnassus. Now suppose he is still faintly alive and does not care to write yet another paper on imagery in Pope or cancel-sheets in Melville. He wants to test his critical sense against a contemporary work. He does not know enough French or German to write about European masters. What is he to do? He turns to the American scene. The giants are no longer about. Faulkner is making tape recordings and Hemingway is adding further gore to *Death in the Afternoon* (surely one of the dullest books in our time). Along comes a small though clearly interesting fish like Salinger and out go the whaling fleets. The academic critic can do his piece with few footnotes, it will be accepted by critical reviews or little magazines, and it is another tally on the sheet of his career.

American literary criticism has become a vast machine in constant need of new raw material. There are too many critical journals, too many seminars, too many summer schools and fellowships for critics. One is reminded of the ambitions of Marcia, a character in the New York *Herald Tribune* comic strip, *Miss Peach.* Asked what she wished to become in life, the little brute answered, "A critic." And whom would she criticize? "Every man, woman, and child in the United States." There has never been, and cannot be, enough good literature produced at any given moment to supply a critical industry so massive and serious. The immediate past, moreover, has been a classic period for critics. With Eliot,

Snow Storm

(From the Russian of Boris Pasternak)

Here in this suburb where not a single
Foot dared step, where only storm and wizardry
Dared be, here in this circle of madness
Where the snow, like a slain man, slept profoundly,—

Wait, wait, in this suburb where not a single
Foot dared step, where only storm and wizardry
Dared be, for a stray, broken thong of harness
Whips at the window suddenly.

I see blackness outside, and where are we?
This place may be in Moscow or in the outskirts
Or beyond the bridge or elsewhere.—(It is midnight;
A chance walker recoils in fear from me.)

Listen in this lost place, where not a single
Foot dared step, where soul-murderers meet,
O storm whiter than linen, listen to your
Lipless and voiceless herald, the aspen leaf!

Toss about and knock on all the gates;
Peer everywhere and whirl up from the cobbles,
—This is not the city or the midnight you suppose;
You too are lost, O messenger of sorrow!—

You have whispered to me, and with cause.
In this suburb, where not a single man. . . .
I am like you. . . . I have fallen from the road:
—This is not the city or the midnight I supposed.

STEPHEN STEPANCHEV

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Pound, Leavis, Edmund Wilson, Trilling, Blackmur, Tate and Yvor Winters in the field, just how much use is there in writing yet another essay on Dante or Shakespeare or Yeats? The quarry of greatness having been exhaustively mined, younger critics turn their big guns on to the smaller targets.

All this has serious consequences. There is, at the moment, a gross devaluation of standards (the Cozzens ecstasy of a few seasons back is a case in point). If criticism does not serve to distinguish what is great from what is competent, it is not carrying out its proper task. If it conspires to suggest that transcendent values are made articulate in anything quite as loose and glossy as the maunderings of Zooey, it is betraying its responsibilities. Of course, Salinger is a most skillful and original writer. Of course, he is worth discussing and praising. But not in terms appropriate to the master poets of the world, not with all the pomp and circumstance of final estimation. By all means, let us have Esmé, Daumier-Smith and all the Glasses. But let us not regard them as the house of Atreus reborn.

The Rain

All night the sound had
come back again,
and again falls
this quiet, persistent rain.

What am I to myself
that must be remembered,
insisted upon,
so often? Is it

that never the ease,
even the hardness,
of rain falling
will have for me

something other than this,
something not so insistent —
am I to be locked in this
final uneasiness.

Love, if you love me,
lie next to me.
Be for me, like rain,
the getting out

of the tiredness, the fatuousness, the
semi-
lust of intentional indifference.
Be wet
with a decent happiness.

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The RLS Factor

R. S. Baker

SINCE World War II, and particularly since the advent of the Eisenhower Administration, the nation's thinkers have been nearly unanimous in their declarations that: (1) U.S. values have undergone a significant shift, and (2) that shift has been for the worse. The emergent image of the New America is one of a complacent military matriarchate, dedicated to moralism and muscle-flexing abroad and compulsive consumption of goods and services at home.

A good many of these critics place the genesis of the new values in that vast conglomeration of artifacts and practices called popular culture. Borrowing methods from the anthropologists, the "armchair" (as opposed to "slide-rule") camp among sociologists, and the myth-and-ritual school of literary criticism, the "pop cultch" analysts have treated us to elaborate explorations of the hidden significance of Mickey Spillane, hit song lyrics, Little Golden Books, Li'l Abner and Orphan Annie, soap operas and the barbecue rites of Suburbia.

While I have no quarrel with their proffered image of the national decay, I do take issue with finding its locus in current mass culture. These gentlemen have been barking up twigs that won't bloom for yet another half-century. As an antidote to their flagrant anti-historicism I offer a discovery of my own, the RLS Factor.

Among us discoverers there is a tradition of recording with honesty and humility the exact circumstances of the Great Find. One recent evening, overcome by sudden rebellion, I told my wife I would read to our eldest son rather than wash the dishes. He brought me a tome known to him only as "the bwown book" and, after mumbling through a few pages, I was stunned by the enormous significance of the slim volume. Such ecstatic moments are known to but few men; I felt much as Hitler must have felt when stumbling upon *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

The book, of course, was Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*. I propose to demonstrate that within its few pages lie the roots of current U.S. policies foreign and domestic, our domination by feminine values and, above all, the tone of present national life. If such claims appear ridiculous, the reader is urged to consider the following:

1. The generation now in power—persons holding the top positions in politics, finance and communications—consists of men between the ages of fifty and seventy.

2. Their primal mythologies will therefore date from the period between the late 1880s and 1914.

3. *A Child's Garden of Verses*, since its publication in 1885, has been the most popular children's book in the Anglo-American world.

The Stevenson *Weltanschauung* consists of a set of neatly interlocking values, each one of which has an obvious parallel in contemporary American life. We may begin with RLS's blatant optimism, his patent failure to deal in limitations and the tragic sense of things. The world of *A Child's Garden* (like our own "official" one) is one in which everything is understood and all errors are remediable, and constant joy is the only permissible emotion. This is expressed in "Happy Thought," here presented in its entirety:

> The world is so full
> of a number of things,
> I'm sure we should all
> be as happy as kings.

The sheer "number of things" rather

R. S. BAKER, who teaches English at Oregon College of Education, has been a printer, seaman, Army instructor and medical editor.

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well defines the fragmented offerings of TV programing and the content and make-up of the major weekly magazines. And our frantic pursuit of an ever-elusive happiness has as its primary mode the acquisition of "things" on a quantitative rather than qualitative basis. Naturally, to be as happy as kings we must blink away the various unpleasantnesses that insist on arising. As RLS put it in a letter to William Archer, "*A propos*, you are very right about my voluntary aversion from the painful sides of life."

Such a morality fits hand-in-glove with a piety of the rigor expressed by Stevenson's "A Thought":

> It is very nice to think
> The world is full of meat and drink
> With little children saying grace
> In every Christian kind of place.

This could well come from a news release bearing a White House dateline. And it is but a short slide from religious to national smugness, in which wealthiness is next to godliness and each may be a route to the other. Appropriate texts could be lifted from anywhere within the annual cascade of business speeches, but I prefer RLS's "System":

> Every night my prayers I say,
> And get my dinner every day;
> And every day that I've been good
> I get an orange after food.
>
> The child that is not clean and neat,
> With lots of toys and things to eat,
> He is a naughty child, I'm sure—
> Or else his dear papa is poor.

This not only explains our new gimmick-centered materialism (we all invest in tail-fins or their equivalents because no one wants to be thought naughty, or cares to have—or be—a poor papa), but also speaks reams on recent U.S. foreign policy. It may be true that isolationism is a dead issue, but in the subtle shift in self-image from victim to victor Uncle Sam has retained a sense of his absolute difference from lesser breeds without the law. In the past decade this has taken on a close resemblance to the hauteur of England in the imperialist 80s. But what should we expect from a generation raised on "Foreign Children"?

> Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,
> Little frosty Eskimo
> Little Turk or Japanee,
> O! don't you wish that you were me?

After a grudging admission that *something* can be said for the exotic foreign way of life, the poem throws a neat clincher:

> You have curious things to eat,
> I am fed on proper meat;
> You must dwell beyond the foam,
> But I am safe and live at home.

It is (or should be) a truism that nations that have become ruling powers have a way of accommodating themselves to militarism. Our method is to sheathe the sword in the crocheted scabbard of domesticity. When our occupation troops land, they bring with them all the comforts of home, including wives, kiddies and P.X.s that look just like the department store on Main Street. (I find it instructive, for example, that the only major recent hassle over the posh Air Force Academy concerns not curriculum nor candidate selection but *drapes*.) Through such strategies we convince ourselves (if no one else) that we are only *playing* at being soldiers. But this should be no surprise to Stevenson readers. In the preface to the Biographical Edition of his *Collected Poems*, RLS's wife, Fanny, admits that "His choice of the profession of literature was an acknowledgment that his health would not admit of his becoming what he wished to be most—a soldier."

When it is so much sheer fun to play soldier, war becomes not an extension of politics but a substitute for it. Stevenson once complained in a letter to Sydney Colvin, "Tacitus, I fear, was too solid for me. I liked the war part; but the dreary intriguing at Rome was too much." Isn't brinkmanship the natural resort for a diplomacy that shrinks from "dreary intriguing," that prefers to divide the world into friend and foe, to shrink it to the pleasant dimensions of the garden of RLS's grandfather at Colinton Manse?

The avoidance of "dreary intriguing" is linked to a deeper impulse toward disengagement from the strife-torn earth itself. David Daiches has noted the habitual "view from above" that runs through *A Child's Garden*: Stevenson consistently di-

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minishes the world by viewing it from the safe remove of a treetop, a soaring swing, or a tower. I believe a similar impulse is behind our passion for air travel, our attachment to terms like "summit" and perhaps the rather irrational drive to put a man into orbit.

And when sheer height does not bring about the desired detachment from the hurly-burly of actual life, a retreat to the "Land of Counterpane" will. Semi-invalidism as a way of life is another recently added facet of American public life. One has only to think of how discussion of health reports on a host of leaders from the President on down has replaced sexual and fiscal scandal as the hot topic for gossip at the political cocktail party. Granted, it is a natural outcome of human physiology that the fifty-seventy age group will be approaching or within the period of chronic illness. But whereas the former practice was to conceal disability, the Stevenson-schooled power elite comfortably accepts the role of invalid. If we had a national goddess, our artists could appropriately limn a young-old Uncle Sam fast a-bed, surrounded by toy soldiers, having fun-and-games under the watchful eye of a maternal figure closely resembling the tender-tough Stevenson nurse, Mrs. Alison Cunningham, the beloved "Cummy" to whom RLS dedicated *A Child's Garden of Verses*.

A fruitful area of inquiry might be opened up by asking just why the Stevenson book occupies the central position rather than, say, *Pinocchio* (written about the same time) with its emphasis on truth-telling, on the palpable evil in the world and its powerful push toward attaining responsible manhood.

But it is RLS's book that we are stuck with, and I have by no means exhausted this rich mine. Voluminous glosses could be written in exegesis of any small poem in the Stevenson book. But that is a job I leave to the professionals. They could well begin with the poem that contains in essence the past American decade, "Marching Song":

Bring the comb and play upon it!
Marching, here we come!
Willie cocks his highland bonnet,
Johnnie beats the drum.

Mary Jane commands the party,
Peter leads the rear;
Feet in time, alert and hearty,
Each a Grenadier!

All in the most martial manner
Marching double-quick;
While the napkin like a banner
Waves upon a stick!

Here's enough of fame and pillage,
Great commander Jane!
Now that we've been round the village,
Let's go home again.

Let the "pop cultch" boys drop their comic books, turn off their TV sets and employ their superb tools on the RLS Factor. There is man's work to be done, exploring the symbolism of "napkin," demonstrating how the vigorous verb-clusters are subverted by the poem's form and structure, and explaining just why Mary Jane commands the party.

THEATRE

Harold Clurman

THE "miracle worker" in William Gibson's play of that name (The Playhouse) is Annie Sullivan, whose indomitable patience makes an articulate woman out of a little unruly bundle of energy, a deaf-blind-mute child named Helen Keller. The story, which pictures the first steps in this process of conversion, is fascinating; the theme—the triumph of faith supported by fierce will—is inspiring. The play is a kind of documentary written in an intelligently popular vein; it holds one's attention throughout. It is primitive theatre; its aim is moral and its means are bare action. The most effective scene is wordless: the struggle—slapping, clawing, wrestling—between Annie and little Helen, who fights like a demon against the discipline of table manners. The audience is excited and amused; it also learns something.

Except for their religious purpose, the early morality plays were rarely much better. The psychological "lining" which Mr. Gibson has provided for his play—Annie's background and notes on the kind of folk Helen's parents are—is merely sufficient to situate the action and saves the play from seeming clinical. The sort of primitive action that this play possesses is the root from which theatre began: *The Miracle Worker* is therefore fundamentally sound. But

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it is dangerous to mistake the theatre's root for its flower.

The production has been skillfully directed by Arthur Penn. There are three outstanding performances. Anne Bancroft (as Annie Sullivan) most impressively commands what is sometimes termed "actors' faith": the capacity completely to identify herself at each moment with what she is representing. Patty Duke (as the child Helen Keller) is brilliantly arresting as well as appealing; while as her mother, Patricia Neal, in a rather difficult role (it might have been played by a more fragile woman), wins us by a selfless devotion to her task and by innate power.

JULIE HARRIS is one of the finest actresses we have. Her present vehicle *The Warm Peninsula* by Joe Masteroff (Helen Hayes Theatre) carries her bumpily—or perhaps I should say she rides it cheerily. It is about the prenuptial adventures of a plain girl from Milwaukee. It is like what I suppose a *True Confessions* story to be or the average TV tale.

I disqualify myself from any verdict on *Take Me Along* (Shubert Theatre), the musical made by Bob Merrill, Joseph Stein and Robert Russell from Eugene O'Neill's *Ah! Wilderness.* Not every critic is suited to serve as juror in every case. I shall merely report that several reviewers liked the show (more or less), some were pleased by its tunes, nearly everyone was delighted with the tap dance because it was performed by such unlikely gentlemen as Walter Pidgeon and Jackie Gleason. I was surprised to hear Eileen Herlie sing as well as she did (although it cannot be said that there are any voices in the show), and I enjoyed Robert Morse as O'Neill's adolescent.

There are no harmful ingredients anywhere in this production (though I was bored by the Beardsley ballet) and Peter Glenville has directed it commendably—but there is a certain tradition of homespun rural Americana (Booth Tarkington's time) which is simply not my bottle of sarsaparilla. There is, however, a large public for it.

The "illustrated" reading—it is not a play—which Paul Shyre has made of John Dos Passos' *U.S.A.* (Martinique Theatre) should interest many readers of this journal. It interested me.

It was hardly to be expected that such complex material as the famous novel contains would be made into a wholly coherent dramatic text. What remains of the novel in this reading, through the use of Dos Passos' lyrical journalese, is the nostalgic glint of the original. But "nostalgia" is not the exact word for the feeling the performance communicates.

The novel dramatized a chaos which conveyed a total impression of bitter melancholy, a sort of jangled regret, a doom with a jeering tinkle of bells. The effect of the reading, in which the personal stories are very briefly limned, is more satiric, almost shaming. The chronicle of America, from the McKinley era to the early depression days of 1931, is presented as a panorama of gigantic waste. The U.S.A. emerges as a country of unbounded innocence, idealism and energy chewed and ground to death by some monstrous machine invented by an idiot genius for exhibition in a universal Luna Park.

What can all this mean to the youth of our day? The "machine" is not so different now, but we have made ourselves "comfortable" in it. It hums on its well-oiled tracks like a twelve-thousand-dollar motor car. It is now called the "human condition"—instead of the inhuman condition. *U.S.A.* struck me as a derisive hoot from the more perky past—a razzberry guying its audience and perhaps its original author with the memory of a time when it did not seem improper to be angry.

The participants in this reading—William Windom, Peggy McCay, Laurence Hugo, Joan Tetzel, William Redfield, Sada Thompson and their director Paul Shyre are all to be congratulated for an incisive and varied presentation of a new kind of entertainment.

MUSIC

Lester Trimble

NO MUSICAL organization ever arrived in the United States or on the stage of Carnegie Hall with a larger fund of good will awaiting it than did the Philharmonia Hungarica. These were musicians who had escaped Hungary in 1956. We had all read of the Austrians' efforts to care for the refugees from the uprising and, in typically Austrian, music-loving style, to give special attention to the needs of the musicians, many of whom had abandoned even their instruments in their flight. Word then came that these men (and a few women) had formed themselves into an orchestra, that they were touring in Europe, and that they wanted to come to the United States. Finally, with the help of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the Ford Foundation and the

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Rockefeller Foundation, here they were.

The Philharmonia Hungarica is a small orchestra: too small. To have only eighty players, considering present-day requirements for woodwinds and brasses, gives an orchestra a string section that is bound to be out of balance with the rest of the group. Moreover, there were only ten first violins, eight violas, but a bass section somewhat large for this arrangement. Thus, there was disbalance not only between the string section and the other choirs of the orchestra, but within the string section itself. This disbalance could be adjusted very easily, and I think it should be, if the Philharmonia Hungarica intends to function as a major orchestra. If there are not enough Hungarian string players available (an unimaginable circumstance), persons of other nationalities should be hired. The small number of musicians needed to balance the group could not possibly change its national character.

INDEED, it is on the point of national character that I think the directorship of the Philharmonia Hungarica should be extremely careful. This orchestra wants to maintain itself as an animate protest against the suppression of the Hungarian revolt and the continued Soviet domination of the musicians' homeland. As a major part of its repertory, therefore, it intends to highlight works by Hungarian composers. In principle, that is fine. But I would doubt that the repertory of first-class Hungarian music is large enough to sustain such an emphasis for very long. Liszt is dated; nobody is, or should be, interested in hearing much of him. There is Bartok — and who else?

Certainly, there can be neither musical nor propaganda value in playing second-rate Hungarian music, which is what happened on the Philharmonia's United States debut. Kodaly's *Peacock Variations* may be instrumentally colorful, but its substance is hardly arresting. It might have been written by the composer in a moderately interesting ten minutes instead of a boring twenty-five. Bartok's *Divertimento for String Instruments,* also on the program, is a far better work, but so definitely a minor one in the Bartok catalogue that I cannot for the life of me understand why it was programed on this occasion. No more can I imagine what Rossini's *"Italian in Algiers" Overture* was doing on the concert; why, among the multitude of works available from the Germanic repertory, Mendelssohn's ubiquitous *"Italian" Symphony* had to be chosen (an attack of Italianitis?); nor why anybody thought Berlioz' trashy *Rakoczy March* had turned respectable and could be used as an encore.

In addition to being mystified about the choice of music for the concert, I do not understand why Zoltan Rozsnyai, the young conductor who organized the orchestra and who has been directing it in Europe, was not on the podium. At the request of the orchestra, Antal Dorati, the Hungarian-born director of the Minneapolis Symphony, has been acting as some sort of general director for it since 1957. But since Dorati did not form the orchestra, and cannot possibly be responsible for such intimations of musical personality as it possesses, it seemed inappropriate that he, rather than Rozsnyai, was entrusted with the American debut.

As things stand, Rozsnyai remains an unknown quantity insofar as the musical community of New York is concerned, and Mr. Dorati has shown himself to be a far less able conductor than I had imagined him to be. His direction of the orchestra did nothing to draw from it any special quality or quantity of sound, nor did it delineate the sense or style of any of the music in a noteworthy way. I cannot escape the idea that the group would have played just as well if almost anybody capable of beating time had been in front of it.

No piece of music on the program was really difficult to play. The Mendelssohn Symphony, the Rossini Overture, and the *Rakoczy March* are played by student orchestras everywhere. And a conductor who does not perform even such elementary functions as balancing the fugal entries in the Mendelssohn is not earning his salt. The Kodaly piece can be made to sound brave with little effort: when a composer makes all his violins play in unison, there can be no difficulty in finding the main idea, nor in making it sound. But the test of a conductor is in subtler passages that permit nuance and require care in their adjustment.

The Philharmonia Hungarica is not only a new orchestra, it is a young one. I would judge the average age of its members to be about twenty-seven. In its general sound, therefore, there is much of the resilient and trusting energy of youth. But as an ensemble, it has not yet found a catalyst to turn it into the splendid instrument it might be. With a few more strings, a broader musical philosophy (and nothing is so revolutionary, nor such good propaganda, as a belief just in *music* itself), and a conductor of the very first water, this group could surprise the Western world. I hope some day it does.

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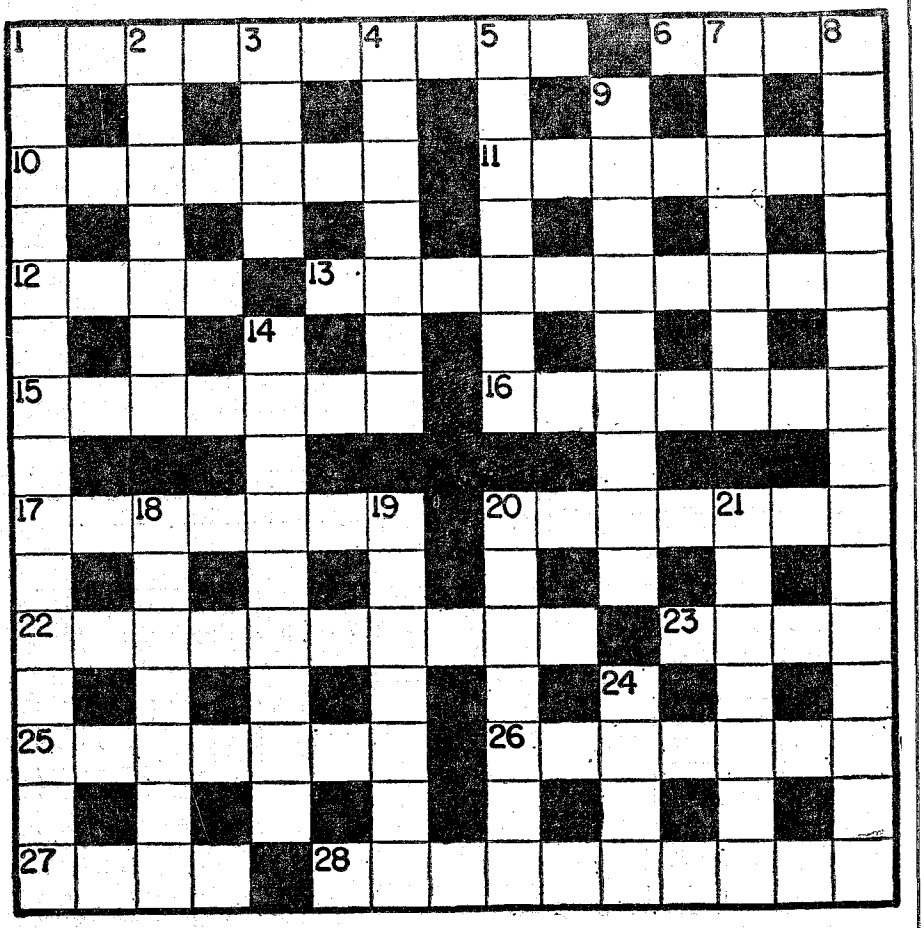
Crossword Puzzle No. 841

By FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1, 1 down, 20 across, 14 down and 8 down WPTHOHC, as a paternal tribute? (5, 2, 3, 5, 2, 5, 3, 5, 2, 3, 6, 2, 3, 10)

6 This man got sat on! (4)

10 You can't say it's nothing to sneeze about, but we got angry about it. (7)

11 His 'n' Her sort of wine! (7)

12 Talk about an operatic hero! (4)

13 Lets put it around the place that's decked to mark a celebration! (3, 9)

15 Neither here nor there, but it might blow inside. (7)

16 Left one company shortly, but it might lead to the heart of 13. (7)

17 Listener, not now however, of all the dirt. (7)

20 See 1 across

22 Unable to get a moment with the singer? (10)

23 Obscure the sound of aspersion? (4)

25 Herbs found in the Corinthian capital. (7)

26 Is the cat stretched out on deck, perhaps? (4, 3)

27 University where more than one is put up on a challenge? (4)

28 Put on airs, in a way? You would have to come first in case of a seizure. (10)

DOWN:

1 See 1 across

2 Steady, but not like a Guardsman. (7)

3 Turned out? Not in Indian style! (4)

4 Rather bumpy bend leads to 2's conclusion. (7)

5 Tunes that end with a cheer could be uplifting. (7)

7 Place where an expedition came upon crude oil? (7)

8 See 1 across

9 Did they keep the 11 type in the rear cells? (9)

14 See 1 across

18 Moved fast, somewhat like the stock of 9. (One might go completely through things this way.) (7)

19 I'd scorn to be Hitler's perfect type. (7)

20 Not so constant by comparison. (7)

21 The author of "Capitols to Investigate." (7)

24 Not a very big portion of pie. (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 840

ACROSS: 1 and 11 The Party of the First Part; 10 Tampa; 12 Countless; 13 Datum; 14 Protuberance; 19 Bank director; 22 Expel; 24 Corkscrew; 25 Carnivora; 26 Usual; 27 As dead as a Dodo. DOWN: 2 Humbug; 3 Plastered; 4 Reflector; 5 Yards; 6 Feted; 7 Heartens; 8 Stick; 9 Stumped; 15 Backroads; 16 Riot squad; 17 Absence; 18 Inspires; 20 and 21 Ground swell; 23 Loire; 24 Cloud.

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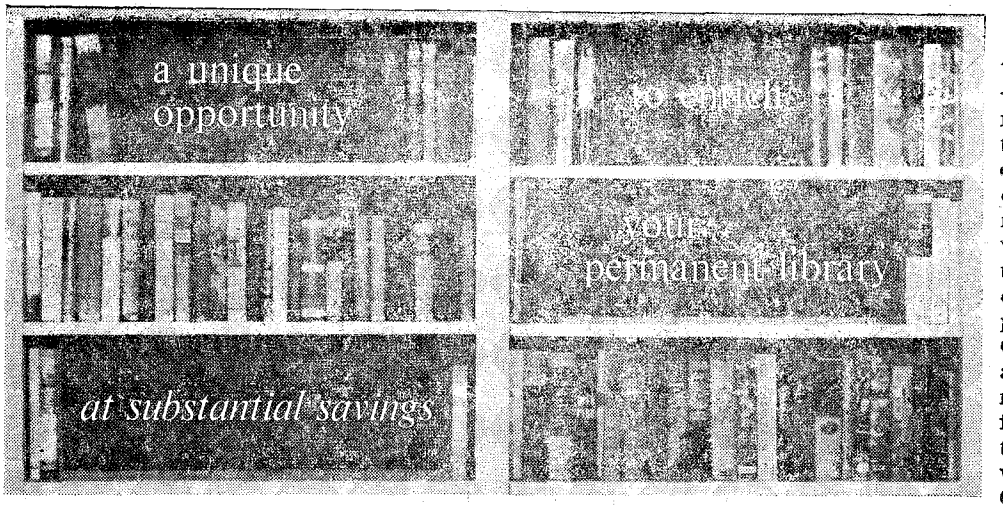

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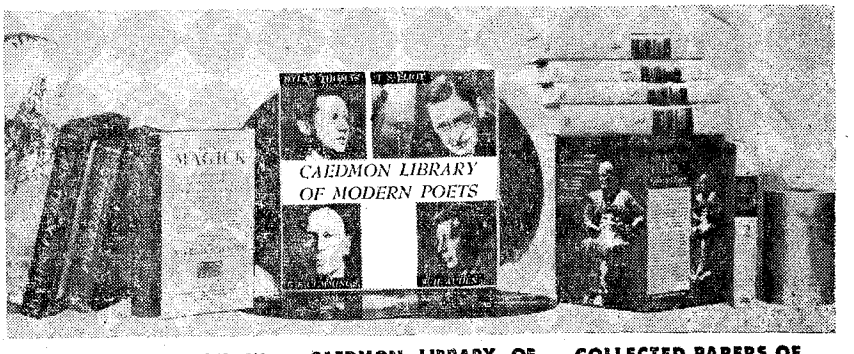

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